University of Alberta

The Experience of Inclusion in Grade 1 Physical Education

by

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Abstract

A limited research base exists examining the experience of inclusion in physical education. Specifically, there are a lack of studies that have included multiple perspectives. To address this gap, the purpose of this study was to gain a holistic understanding of the experience of inclusion in Grade 1 physical education, using the case study method. Multiple perspectives were drawn from a boy with Down syndrome, his Grade 1 classmates without disabilities (n= 5), classroom aide, physical education teacher and school principal, through interviews, observations, and extensive field notes. An inductive thematic analysis of the data was completed using the constant comparative technique. The meaning of inclusion was described as providing opportunities for participation and social engagement. Social interactions and misbehaviour were identified as factors that influence inclusion. All of these elements contributed to the experience of the child with Down syndrome.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Experience of Inclusion in Physical Education

Over the past 25 years or so, inclusion has emerged as the paradigm of choice for educating students with disabilities (Block, 2000). The definition of inclusive physical education has expanded and developed to include the students, support services, and goals of the program. Specifically,

> inclusive physical education means providing all students with disabilities the opportunity to participate in regular physical education with their peers, with supplementary aides and support services as needed to take full advantage of the goals of motor skill acquisition, fitness, knowledge of movement, and psycho-social well-being, toward the outcome of preparing all students for an active lifestyle appropriate to their abilities and interests (Goodwin, Watkinson, & Fitzpatrick, 2003, p.193).

The inclusion philosophy evolved from a history without educational opportunities for students with disabilities to an educational environment designed to meet the individual needs of students regardless of ability or disability (Block, 2000). The focus of the movement to inclusion is on the placement of children with disabilities in the general classroom, with the expectation of achieving a number of proposed benefits. However, a very limited research base exists upon which to draw information regarding the effectiveness of inclusion in achieving these benefits. This is in part because some of the strongest proponents of inclusion have promoted the position that it is a human rights issue. Therefore, it has been viewed in the past as unacceptable to question the nature of

inclusive programming, and particularly its effectiveness (Stainback, Stainback, & Bunch, 1989).

In more recent years, it has become increasingly acceptable to study topics related to inclusion in schools, including physical education. Nevertheless, a number of gaps still exist in the literature. Most notably, there has been little research examining inclusion from the perspective of children with disabilities. This is an important omission that needs to be addressed because inclusion was originally implemented in order to improve the physical education experience for children with disabilities, relative to previous service delivery models (Block, 2000). It is difficult to evaluate how well inclusion has facilitated this goal without understanding perspective of children with disabilities.

In addition to the need for research on inclusion in physical education that includes the perspectives of the children with disabilities, a holistic approach that includes multiple perspectives is also desirable. A multiple perspectives approach takes into account the views of the various stakeholders within the physical education environment, including the physical education teacher and students with and without disabilities. Essentially, this approach accesses perceptions of the environment from those who structure it and those who participate within it. Unfortunately, the current literature pertaining to inclusion in physical education is lacking in terms of a multiple perspectives approach. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine the experience of inclusion of a child with a disability in an elementary physical education class from the multiple perspectives of the child with a disability, children without disabilities and their teacher. In order to address this purpose, the case study method was used.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study is an effort to understand the inclusion in elementary physical education from multiple perspectives. To provide context, a brief history of inclusion will be presented. A framework of inclusive physical education provides further explanation of the concept of inclusion and highlights its complex nature. This will be followed by a review of the research literature on inclusion in physical education, and a look at various studies that have accessed the perspective of children in physical education contexts.

History of Inclusion

In order to fully appreciate the reasons for the limited research into inclusion, it is important to examine the foundation from which inclusion has developed in North America. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were few educational opportunities for people with disabilities. Although limited opportunities were available for children with mild disabilities in the general classroom, this was conditional upon them keeping pace with the rest of the class without the benefit of support services. If these expectations were not met, or children were deemed 'too disabled', they were sent home with no alternatives (Block, 2000).

With these limited opportunities available, parental advocacy groups began to form (Block, 2000). The 1950's to 1970's saw the development of special education schools in response to an increased awareness of the unique needs of children with disabilities related to education. A dual education system emerged, consisting of general education and special education. However, there were numerous problems with this dual system. For example, in order to receive special education, children had to be formally identified and labeled. The labeling of individuals as different, and therefore in need of

special education services, has been linked to several associated outcomes, such as ridicule and poor self- image (Block, 2000). In addition, there were placement issues as many students with disabilities were placed in special education schools without any discussion of the possibility that they could benefit from a general education environment. There was no consideration that students with disabilities may have been able to participate in some classroom activities in the general environment or that they may have benefited from the contact with their typically developing peers (Block, 2000).

Beginning in the mid 1970's, the education system began to offer a continuum of services. A cascading model has been used to depict this continuum, with the least restrictive environment (LRE) as the desired end point. "The LRE for students with disabilities is one that, whenever possible, is the same environment in which students without disabilities receive their education" (Block, 2000, p.26). When a fully integrated environment was not possible, a continuum of services including full or part time special classes, special schools, or even hospitals or treatment centers were available as alternatives. During this same time period in the United States, legislation was introduced guaranteeing children a free and appropriate education (Block, 2000). Thus, with placement decisions based on the individual, in theory, children with disabilities could now receive an appropriate education.

The concept of the LRE was expanded upon as the education environment evolved to mainstreaming in 1975. This involved the "process of placing students with disabilities into general education classes with appropriate support services as determined by the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)" (Block, 2000, p.29). Despite highlighting the need for support services, a number of problems resulted from

mainstreaming. This included 'dumping' students into the general classroom without the appropriate support services. In addition, students with disabilities were expected to follow the same curriculum at the same pace (Block, 2000). It seems that placement of students with disabilities in the general classroom was generally thought to be sufficient. In effect, the students with disabilities were expected to adapt to this new situation without any modifications made to the learning environment.

Finally, in the 1980's mainstreaming evolved to accommodate the needs of individual students, and was called inclusion. This was described as "the merging of special and general education such that all children, regardless of abilities or disabilities, are educated within the same environment where each child's individualized needs are met" (Block, 1999, p.6). Underlying this movement toward inclusion was the assumption that "education is a human rights issue and persons with disabilities should be part of schools, which should modify their operations to include all students" (Karagiannis, Stainback & Stainback, 1996, p.3). In fact, for the original proponents of inclusion, the issue of human rights was paramount.

In an effort to garner support for inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools, negative aspects of segregation were discussed, and highlighted feelings of alienation by students with disabilities. For example, in an argument against special education for children with disabilities, it was stated that segregated education could

> generate a feeling of inferiority as to (children's) status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds... This sense of inferiority... affects the motivation of the child to learn... (and) has a tendency to retard... educational

and mental development (Brown vs. the Board of Education, 1954 as cited in Karagiannis, et al. 1996, p.6).

The preceding statement suggests that feelings of inferiority and alienation result from the process of being segregated. Unfortunately, however, these negative feelings may also exist in inclusive settings. Research findings have revealed that placing students with and without disabilities in the same learning environment does not guarantee acceptance (Place & Hodge, 2001). In fact, feelings of inferiority and alienation can exist in the classroom for any student. For instance, typically developing middle or high school students with poor gross motor skills may feel isolated in physical education (Carlson, 1995) and may experience the same feelings of inferiority and lack of motivation in regular physical education as was described by Brown versus the Board of Education (1954). Since feelings of inferiority and segregation may also be found within inclusive settings, this highlights the complex nature of inclusion.

In addition to describing the negative aspects of segregation, numerous benefits of inclusion were emphasized to highlight the advantages of including children with disabilities in regular physical education. For example, the proposed benefits that were anticipated for students with and without disabilities included the development of friendship, respect, and understanding of individual differences. Moreover, gains in academic and social skills were to be achieved in terms of socialization and learning daily life skills through peer interaction (Karagiannis et al., 1996). However, just as placing students with and without disabilities in the same learning environment did not ensure the elimination of feelings of inferiority, the aforementioned benefits cannot be guaranteed through placement alone. Unfortunately, research supporting these benefits was limited to

inclusive programs that were properly implemented and, therefore, representative of only one segment of inclusive programs (Block, 1999). As a result, it was again assumed that the benefits observed in one segment of inclusive programs could be generalized and therefore assumed to result from all inclusive environments. This includes those programs that were poorly implemented such that they amounted to little more than physical placement within the general education environment.

Related to the notion regarding the positive outcomes of inclusion, a number of assumptions were made concerning the quality of physical education classes already in place. These assumptions were that (a) classes were an appropriate size, (b) teachers had positive attitudes toward including student with disabilities, and (c) teachers had access to the necessary support and training to enable appropriate implementation of inclusion in their classrooms (Block, 1999). It was assumed that an ideal environment was in place, therefore ensuring a smooth transition for inclusion. Unfortunately, in many cases these assumptions were not supported (Block, 1999). Class sizes were often far larger than was appropriate or manageable, there was little evidence that teachers supported inclusion and access to training was frequently insufficient (Block, 1999).

Once inclusion began to be implemented in schools in the United States, it became evident that there was a lack of personnel support within classrooms. Consistent with problems that occurred with mainstreaming, the problem of 'dumping' students with disabilities into general classes arose. At the same time, many adapted physical education services were eliminated because they were no longer considered necessary. According to Block (1999), these services would likely have been beneficial in assisting with a smooth transition into inclusion.

With a number of proposed benefits, and assumptions about a supportive learning environment, one would think that research would be encouraged and pursued in order to ensure effective implementation and promote inclusion. However, since inclusion was justified based on human rights, proponents such as Stainback and Stainback (1989) disregarded the need for empirical support. It was considered unacceptable to question the value of inclusion through research because inclusion was the morally right thing to do.

> The relevant issue is not the effectiveness of special or regular education, but integration versus segregation; throughout history, segregation has been found to be morally and ethically wrong" and "whether or not we integrate our schools is in the final analysis not a scientific or research question (Stainback et al., 1989, p.262).

This view extended to the field of adapted physical education, where it was also not acceptable to question the philosophy of inclusion, or to study the effectiveness of its implementation. Even in the mid 1990's, years after the initial implementation of inclusion, the climate among professionals was not conducive to studying inclusion. "Whether in formal debates at professional meetings or informal gatherings in teachers' lounges, nothing can divide a room of educators into two camps like discussions of inclusion" (Block, 1994, p.17). The barriers of political correctness prevented a close examination of inclusion until recent years. As a result, only a limited research base exists.

A Framework of Inclusion

Goodwin et al. (2003) described a conceptual framework of inclusion that illustrates the complexity of inclusion. It was developed by adapting conceptual framework models originally created by Dunkin and Biddle (1974) and DePauw and Goc Karp (1992) (as cited in Goodwin et al., 2003). The variables within the adapted framework can be described using three phases, which are comprised of a total of six categories. First, the pre-teaching phase consists of (a) student variables, which describe who they are and what the students contribute to the learning environment, (b) instructional program, which refers to an understanding of the curriculum, goals and objectives of the program and (c) teacher values which describe the value a teacher places on including students with disabilities in their classroom. Second, the teaching phase is comprised of (a) thoughtful instruction, which refers to monitoring lessons, making changes as needed and effectively using available resources and (b) shared responsibility which refers to the importance of collaboration between many individuals (ex. teacher, principal, parent, student). Finally, teacher and student experiences represent the post-teaching phase, during which the interaction of these variables listed in the previous two phases are compared with the experiences of both the teacher and student. This framework identifies the numerous variables that interact in creating a successful inclusive environment. The pre-teaching variables provide the context of the environment. The teaching variables describe the implementation of inclusion within that environment. Finally, the post-teaching category describes the actual experiences that occurred within that inclusive environment (Goodwin et al., 2003). Figure 2.2 illustrates

how the variables interact with one another within an inclusive physical education environment.

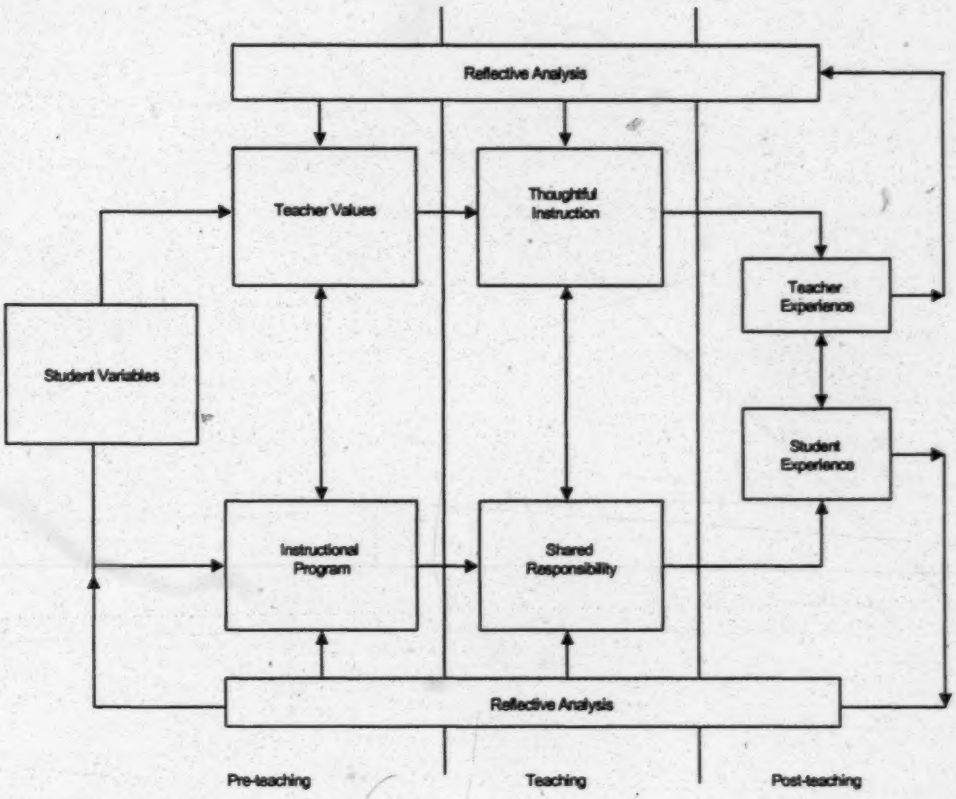

Figure 2.2 A conceptual framework of inclusion[1]

Note. From Inclusive physical education: a conceptual framework. In R. D. Steadward, G. D. Wheeler, & E. J. Watkinson, (Eds.), *Adapted physical activity* (p. 196), by D. L. Goodwin, E. J. Watkinson, & D. A. Fitzpatrick, 2003, Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press. Reprinted with permission.

Findings of Research Pertaining to Inclusion in Physical education

As mentioned earlier, attitudes towards questioning inclusion have changed in recent years, and a growing research base has begun to emerge. Much of the research has focused on teachers and on children without disabilities.

Evidence of the impact of inclusion on children is available demonstrating that successful inclusion is possible. Kalyvas and Reid (2003) conducted a study to investigate the effects of adapted games (i.e., games with changed or modified rules) on students' participation levels and enjoyment. They compared the effects of participation in an adapted version of Newcomb (a lead up volleyball game) and a non-adapted version on the participation levels and enjoyment of children aged 7 to 12 years, with and without physical disabilities in a physical education class. The adaptations included: (a) reducing the size and height of the net, (b) using a balloon in place of a ball, (c) a rule specifying that all members of a team had to touch the balloon before it could be sent over the net, and (d) making the service line flexible such that students were allowed to serve the ball from the front line of the court. Students' participation was measured as the amount of active and inactive time on task, and the rate of successful and unsuccessful passes completed during the games. The findings revealed that the adapted game resulted in increased participation for both students with disabilities and those without disabilities. Students with disabilities also expressed higher levels of enjoyment associated with the adapted game than the non-adapted version. For students without disabilities however, enjoyment of the adapted game was differentially related to the age of the students. Specifically, as the age of the students increased, their enjoyment levels decreased. The lowest levels of enjoyment were found with male students without disabilities aged 10 to

12 years. As a result, the researchers concluded that their results provided support for the successful use of adaptations to team games in inclusive physical education settings with younger students (i.e., 7 – 9 years).

Block and Zeman (1996) considered the perspective of students without disabilities in their study of the impact of including students with severe disabilities (moderate to severe mental retardation) in regular physical education, on the motor skill development and attitudes of classmates without disabilities. Two sixth grade classes participated, one of which included three students with disabilities. The researchers hypothesized that with appropriate personnel support and adapted equipment, there would be minimal negative effects on skill development of the students without disabilities. Moreover, the attitudes of students without disabilities toward their classmates with disabilities were expected to become more favorable. The two classes were compared in terms of skills levels and attitudes, before and after the inclusion intervention (i.e., a basketball unit). As predicted, the skill levels of students without disabilities were not negatively affected by including students with severe disabilities; there was no statistically significant difference in skill development between the two classes. The attitudes of students without disabilities in the inclusion class toward their peers with disabilities did not become more favorable following the basketball unit, although neither did they become more negative. The researchers concluded that inclusion of students with severe disabilities in physical education had no negative effects on the skills or attitudes of students with disabilities. Unfavorable attitudes from children without disabilities did not develop after children with disabilities were included in physical education.

The inclusion of a student with a severe disability was the focus of a case study by Vogler, Koranda, and Romance (2000). They studied a male kindergarten student (Sammy) with severe cerebral palsy using the human resource model as a framework. This framework involves changing who teaches, in contrast to other models that change what is taught or how it is taught. For this study, an adapted physical educator (APE) served as the human resource. Systematic observations were conducted using the Academic Learning Time- Physical Education (ALT-PE) instrument, which measures how time is spent within a physical education class. In addition, interviews with the students without disabilities and the teachers (both the regular physical education teacher and the APE) were conducted to find out their feelings toward, and thoughts about, the inclusive program. Sammy was not interviewed due to the severe nature of his disability. Thus, the results reflect the perspective of the other students and teachers. Findings supported the use of the human resource model for successful inclusion, although, the physical education teacher identified some concerns regarding continued social acceptance throughout the child's school career. She suggested that the nature of activities in kindergarten physical education are conducive to successful inclusion as they were often individualized for all students and therefore allowed for active participation by Sammy. However, with the increased focus on competitive activities that occurs with higher grades, there was concern expressed that social acceptance of students with disabilities may decrease because students without disabilities would be more reluctant to include a slower moving student such as Sammy (Vogler et al., 2000).

In one of the few studies of inclusion that compared an inclusive and a segregated setting, Fisher and Meyer (2002) found that students with a range of severe disabilities

including autism, profound mental retardation, or dual sensory impairments made more gains in social competence and traditional domains of development (including motor skills and personal and community living) in an inclusive setting or a segregated setting. The two environments were based on an educational program, in which 40 children (20 in each group) were already enrolled and were not limited to a physical education setting. The participants were only enrolled in one group and were not exposed to the other setting. The results of the two-year study suggest that inclusive settings provide a positive environment for students with severe disabilities, as evidenced by their social skills, when compared to a segregated or self-contained program (Fisher & Meyer, 2002).

To identify the gaps in the inclusion research base, it is useful to examine the foci of the above studies. The participants included students without disabilities, teachers, and students with severe disabilities. However, missing from the data collected was the perspective of students with disabilities. Communication difficulties often limit the researcher's ability to understand the experiences of students with severe disabilities from their perspective. Information is drawn from other sources, including teachers, other students, parents, or aids. Although it is valuable to study the impact of inclusion on students without disabilities, it is also important to create a complete picture, including the perspectives of all students.

Limited research has been conducted from the perspective of students with disabilities. Thus far, results where the majority of participants have a physical disability indicate mixed attitudes towards inclusion. In a case study of three eighth grade girls with physical disabilities, Place and Hodge (2001) identified segregated inclusion and social isolation as emerging themes of their experiences. A combination of observation tools,

the ALT-PE and Analysis of Inclusion Practices in Physical education- Form S (AIPE-S), were used in addition to semi- structured interviews. The themes emerged from the interview data. Segregated inclusion referred to occasions when the three girls were separated from their classmates by physical location. While it is unclear why, the girls sometimes considered this a desirable situation. One example of segregated inclusion occurred when the class was outside practicing their baseball skills. The girls were allowed to work together and chose to do so far from the group. In this situation, one possible explanation for their desire to work apart from the group may be that the class was playing on a grassy field, which was a difficult surface for one of the girls to maneuver with her wheelchair. Therefore all three girls chose to practice their softball skills on a paved tarmac surface (Place & Hodge, 2001). This situation could have been altered to allow everyone to participate together. For example, by encouraging the entire class to practice their skills on the tarmac, the students could have all engaged in physical education in close proximity to one another.

Within the theme of social isolation, the girls described situations where they experienced feelings of exclusion, being neglected or feeling as though they were viewed as objects of curiosity (Place & Hodge, 2001). The observational data revealed that very limited interactions occurred between the students with and without disabilities. While social interactions occurred among the students with disabilities and among students without disabilities, the predicted benefit of inclusion in terms of increased social interactions between students with and without disabilities was not supported (Place & Hodge, 2001). The results from this study suggest that an inclusive physical education environment does not guarantee gains in social skills and participation for students with

disabilities. Rather, it appears that there are more factors involved in its successful implementation.

Similar results to those reported by Place and Hodge (2001) were found by Butler and Hodge (2004), in a study that included a participant with an intellectual disability. This study examined the social inclusion of a sixth grade girl with Down syndrome and a boy with a physical disability in Grade 6 physical education. Observational data were collected using the AIPE-S, and interviews were conducted with both of the students with disabilities. Observational data revealed that no interactions took place between students with and without disabilities during approximately 70% of the lessons observed. In addition, interactions that occurred were often unidirectional where students without disabilities provided their classmates with disabilities with verbal support or instruction, and were not engaging in conversations. The results indicated that although limited in number, the interactions that took place between students with and without disabilities were mostly positive, and were described as pleasant, friendly, and respectful (Butler & Hodge, 2004).

Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) described the experiences of students with physical disabilities in inclusive physical education using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Through focus group interviews and drawings, nine students aged 10 to 12 shared experiences that represented good and bad days. Good days were identified as classes in which students were provided with opportunities to participate meaningfully. Moreover, students felt they demonstrated competence and experienced a sense of belonging. These opportunities were made possible by including various activities such as swimming, and wheelchair basketball during a regular

basketball unit. The sense of belonging with classmates was due to supportive interactions between students with and without disabilities. In contrast, bad days were described as unhappy experiences where students' participation was limited, they felt their competence was questioned due to their disability or they experienced social isolation in the form of rejection or neglect. Limited participation was often due to prejudgment of the skill levels of students with disabilities or to physical barriers, such as a lack of ramps or inaccessible outdoor surfaces (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000). The potential for successful inclusion was recognized, however, again, it was revealed that placement in the environment alone does not guarantee success. There were a number of factors identified that can contribute to positive experiences of inclusion by students with disabilities, as well as those that were associated with negative experiences.

The above studies have considered the perspectives of students in inclusive physical education classes. Thus far, results suggest that from the perspective of students with physical disabilities, inclusion may not always be as successful as expected. The perspectives of students have also been accessed in physical education classes made up of children without disabilities.

Solomon and Carter (1995) conducted a study of physical education to identify and understand the perceptions of students in kindergarten and Grade 1. Data from interviews with the physical education teacher and 104 kindergarten and Grade 1 students without disabilities were combined with student drawings of their perception of physical education and observational field notes. The results suggest that the students defined physical education with content specific responses; their responses focused on activities and equipment, often from that day's lesson. In addition, students also recognized the

social aspects of physical education, such as being able to spend time with their friends. When structuring classes, it is important for teachers to have an understanding of the meaning their students attach to the various events that occur in school. In this case it was useful for the teachers to learn that the students relate activities in physical education to health and fitness (Solomon & Carter, 1995). Understanding students and how they perceive physical education would also be beneficial for teachers attempting to implement an effective inclusive physical education environment. For a teacher to be able to meet the needs of individual students, increased understanding of student perceptions is essential.

A study by Ratliffe and Inmwold (1994) included Grade 3 students to gain an understanding of their thoughts, views, and attitudes towards physical education (Ratliffe & Inmwold, 1994). The case study method was used with four participants. The children were interviewed weekly as a group over the course of a fall term of school. During this time, videotapes of the physical education class were shown to the group on two occasions to stimulate discussion. The results identified conflicting perceptions about the goal outcomes of activities between the teacher and students. For example, following an activity in which the children were asked to reveal the number of successful tosses made in 30 seconds, the children believed the purpose was to ensure they were on task and behaving properly, whereas the teacher's intention was to provide the students with motivation to practice this task and improve their score. This led the authors to state, "children's divergent interpretations of the same event suggest that such basic miscommunication of intent may be far more common than we have realized" (Ratliffe & Inmwold, 1994, p. 108). This study has potential implications for teachers attempting to

organize effective inclusive programs. How can teachers implement an effective program if the students misinterpret their intentions? Through examination of the various perceptions of teachers and students with and without disabilities, an increased level of understanding and awareness will be achieved. Hopefully this will increase teachers' abilities to effectively implement inclusive physical education programs.

Ratliffe and Inmwold (1994) described the importance of social experiences within a physical education setting. Choosing partners was an extremely important element of physical education for the children in their study. Participants made many references to partners, both in terms of selection and specific interactions, when discussing things that made them feel good or bad (Ratliffe & Inmwold, 1994). If this is important in a class with children without disabilities, is the same priority placed on partners and social interactions in an inclusive setting? Even though partner selection was not specifically mentioned, the importance of social interaction, in the form of perceived belonging was an important element of the 'good days' described by students with disabilities in Goodwin and Watkinson's (2000) study.

Ratliffe and Inmwold (1994) found there was a downside to partner interactions as well. "Children expressed frustration with other students who were off-task and misbehaving. These disruptive children were perceived as causing the teacher to become upset, therefore hindering their opportunities to participate" (Ratliffe & Inmwold, 1994, p. 109). Unfortunately, there was no specific description of the students who were off-task and misbehaving. Children with disabilities may require extra time to complete activities, or extra assistance by the teacher, depending on the nature and severity of the disability. Do children without disabilities have the above perception of children with

disabilities? Does this affect their interactions within physical education and thus the overall success of inclusion? The nature of social interactions was discussed in Goodwin (2001), which examined the meaning of help in physical education from the perspective of students with disabilities. This study revealed a range of interactions, including ones that were supportive and maintained a student's independence, as well as those that involved help that was interfering and was not consensual. Therefore, the study identified both positive and negative elements of partner interactions for students with disabilities.

It is important to capture the perceptions of both students with and without disabilities to gain a full understanding of the inclusive environment. Ratliffe and Inmwold (1994) were able to show that there are discrepancies between the perceptions and expectations of a physical education teacher and their students. Further examination in an inclusive physical education environment may provide additional insight and understanding.

With the limited studies available considering the perspective of children with disabilities, and the results suggesting differences between teacher and student perceptions, further understanding of the meaning of inclusion from multiple perspectives is needed. How does a physical education *class* experience the inclusion of a child with a disability? This question will be asked in the current study, using the case study method, to provide a rich, thick description of the phenomenon of inclusion from the perspectives of the child with a disability, children without a disability, and their physical education teacher. As such, it was hoped that this study of a Grade 1 physical education class would provide a holistic understanding of inclusion through the use of multiple perspectives.

Assumptions

It is essential that researchers examine their philosophical assumptions and paradigms prior to engaging in a research project. "Paradigms are basic belief systems that represent the most fundamental positions we are willing to take and which cannot be proven or disproven" (Sparkes, 1992, p.12). A researcher's paradigm is not chosen, it is developed through years of socialization in which they learn about the various lenses with which to see the world. Inquiry paradigms are described based on the assumptions of ontology, which refers to the nature of reality, epistemology, which examines the relationship between the knower and the known and methodology, which refers to the way of finding out what can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The ontological position of this paradigm is relativism. In this position, multiple realities are constructed by the mind, with the expectation that they are open to change through increasingly informed and sophisticated constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Sparkes, 1992). Epistemologically, a subjectivist position is adopted, as there is a link between the mind and object. "The knower and the process of knowing cannot be separated from what is known, and facts cannot be separated from values" (Sparkes, 1992, p. 27). Within the interpretative paradigm, hermeneutical and dialectical methodologies are employed. With the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection, data is interpreted using the researcher's constructions along with the participants' constructions. The intent is to create a construction that is more informed and sophisticated than previous constructions (Sparkes, 1992).

I conducted this research within the interpretive paradigm. As I operated under the assumption that multiple realities exist, it was essential to examine the experience of

inclusion from multiple perspectives in order to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. As the instrument of data collection, it was important for me to recognize my own assumptions prior to entering the field.

> Data are a product of the skills and imagination of the researcher and of the interface between the researcher and the researched... The research process will generate meaning as part of the social life it aims to describe and to analyze. (Sparkes, 1992, p.30)

CHAPTER III: METHOD

The purpose of this study was to gain a holistic understanding of the inclusion of a child with a disability in a physical education class. Research methods should be selected in order to best address the purpose of a particular study (Baumgartner, Strong, & Hensley, 2002). In light of this, a qualitative approach was the ideal methodological choice because such approaches are appropriate for comprehending phenomena within their natural settings and understanding the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). More specifically, a qualitative case study methodology was employed (Ghesquiere, Maes, & Vandenberghe, 2004; Stake, 1994, 2000). The qualitative case study has been described as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p.12). In the present study, the phenomenon of interest was inclusion, which was examined through the analysis of a Physical education class. Thus, qualitative case study was an excellent methodological fit with the purposes of this study.

Case study research provides a description of a phenomenon within a specific context, which in the case of the current study, was inclusion. Demonstrating how a phenomenon occurs within the particular setting is considered valuable knowledge (Stake, 1994). Part of the value of case study research stems from the

> The possibility to show the complex connections among diverse factors, and to provide explanations at different levels (e.g., the teacher, the pupil, the classroom, the school and its context). ...The combination of the participants' perceptions of school reality and the observations by the researchers also add to the value of this research method. (Ghesquiere et al., 2004, p.182)

Although there are several different types of qualitative case study, including intrinsic, instrumental, and multiple (Stake, 1994), an instrumental case study was employed in this study. Within an instrumental case study, the case itself is used to facilitate our understanding of something else (Stake, 1994). Accordingly, for the purpose of this investigation, the case of the physical education class was used to study the issue of inclusion.

In conducting a qualitative case study, three conditions must be satisfied if the methodology is to be used appropriately (Stake, 1994). First, the case must be a bounded system. The case under investigation was a Grade 1 physical education class, bounded by the individuals in the class, including, the teacher and students with and without disabilities. Second, the behavior must be patterned. The physical education class examined in the current study was a structured environment with a format that was repeated on a regular basis. The repetition of class design leads one to assume that behaviors and incidents within that environment are repeated and therefore patterned. The third condition involves the use of the two previous conditions (i.e., the patterns of behaviour within the bounded system of a physical education class) to study a phenomenon (i.e. inclusion).

The qualitative case researcher has a number of conceptual responsibilities, which were addressed throughout the study. They include: (a) determining the boundaries of the case, (b) identifying the research questions to emphasize, (c) developing the issues from patterns of data, (d) triangulating key observations for interpretation, and (e) deciding on alternative explanations and developing assertions about the case (Stake, 1994). A

description of how the conceptual responsibilities were achieved is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Conceptual Responsibilities and How They Were Achieved

Conceptual Responsibility	**How it was achieved**
Determining the boundaries of the case	Following a review of the literature, this was done to purposefully select participants to facilitate our understanding of inclusion
Identifying the research questions to emphasize	This was completed following a thorough review of the current literature to highlight gaps in the knowledge base.
Developing the issues from patterns of data	Patterns were found in the data as results were examined using the constant comparative technique.
Triangulating key observations for interpretation	Data was gathered from interviews, observations and field notes.
Deciding on alternative explanations and developing assertions about the case	Through the data analysis process using the constant comparative technique and through conversations with a critical friend.

Procedure

Data were collected via eight weeks of fieldwork. I joined a Grade 1 physical education class as an assistant and spent the first two weeks getting to know the students, teachers, and principal. This provided me with an opportunity to become familiar with the environment and to get to know the key stakeholders. At this point in the data collection, I was an active participant within the class, building rapport with the students. My role included setting up equipment and participating in games. In addition, I conducted an interview with the principal during the first week, in order to learn about the school's philosophy of inclusion.

At the end of this first week, consent letters were sent home to all of the 22 students. Participants were then selected based on the seven returned consent forms, informal observations made during the first week in the class and input from the physical education and classroom teachers. Following selection of the participants, I began to conduct interviews, and regularly observe the physical education class. Approval from the university research ethics board was obtained prior to beginning data collection. An overview of the timelines associated with this procedure is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Overview of Fieldwork Procedure

	Week of Fieldwork							
Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Developing rapport								
Observations								
Student Interviews								
Teacher Interview								
Aide Interview								
Principal Interview								

Participants

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to select a physical education class that would provide an information-rich case to shed maximum insight into the phenomenon of inclusion. The selection criteria chosen to purposefully sample the class that was subsequently studied (Baumgartner et al., 2002) were: (a) it was a class that received physical education classes 3 or 4 times per week (b) the physical education class included both children with and without disabilities, (c) there was consenting child with a disability in the class, and (d) the physical education teacher and school principal were willing to participate. As a result, a Grade 1 physical education class with 23 children, in an elementary school outside of a major Canadian city was the focus of this case study.

Purposeful sampling was also used to select participants *within* the class. The student with a disability was selected, in addition to students without disabilities. These

latter students were selected on the basis that they represented a range of ability levels within the physical education environment, varied in the frequency of their regular interactions with the child with a disability and had good communication skills. In total, five children without disabilities were interviewed (Allen, Niles, Maya, Tina, Carl, and Stu), along with the child with a disability (Bret), the physical education teacher (Mrs. Wood), the teaching aide (Mrs. Low), and the school principal.[2]

The unit of analysis for this case was the entire class, within the context of the school. This means that the focus was on gaining a holistic understanding of the experience of inclusion for the class as a group, rather than simply focusing on the individual participants (Patton, 2002). Given this, all of the children in the class were included in the observations. However, only selected individuals completed interviews and thus are identified as participants.

Researcher-as-instrument of data collection.

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered the data collection instrument *par excellence*, because the quality of data collected is based on the skills and sensitivity of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This means that I, as a human being, was responsible for collecting and analyzing the data. To prepare the 'instrument' for data collection, developing self-awareness is an asset (Patton, 2002). The following description includes my experiences, and perceptions that guided me prior to and throughout the research process. This provides some context to the perspective from which data analysis occurred.

As a Masters student in the area of Adapted Physical Activity, at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, I have had opportunities to be involved in a variety of

[2] Pseudonyms have been used instead of the participants' names throughout this manuscript.

settings with children engaged in physical activity. As a teaching assistant in courses for undergraduate students in physical education and elementary education, I learned about the different characteristics of a physical education class. As an instructor and program coordinator for a children's motor development program I have had opportunities to observe and participate with many children with and without disabilities in physical activity settings. I developed the ability to communicate with people using a variety of methods from working with children and youth with disabilities through a variety of organizations. Given this background, I felt comfortable in the physical education environment. I was familiar with the types of activities children would be engaging in and had interacted with enough children to feel confident in my ability to establish a rapport with the class.

Regarding my own beliefs about inclusion in physical education, I think that inclusion is the ideal option when both children with and without disabilities are able to achieve the benefits of being in the class. However, I do not necessarily believe that an inclusive setting is the most appropriate for every child. It was this uncertainty regarding the universal appropriateness of inclusive physical education that prompted me to undertake this area of study. Acknowledging my personal beliefs and taking the time to reflect on the possible implications for data collection enhanced the research process and increased my ability to collect data as the primary instrument. This reflexive process was ongoing throughout the data collection and analysis phase of the case study.

Gaining Entry and Establishing Rapport

When conducting research in field settings, the manner in which the researcher gains entry into the setting is an important consideration because the researcher may

encounter several issues or problems (Friedman & Orru, 1991). The nature of these problems can range from social structural, which include the researcher facing the preliminary need to become acquainted with a potential research setting and the openness of that setting to outsiders, to interpersonal, where the researcher must consider when and how to approach and recruit participants (Friedman & Orru, 1991). To gain entry in the current case, I approached the special education coordinator for the specific school board in which Blackwood Elementary (a pseudonym) was a located. The coordinator then sent out an email to all prospective schools. I immediately received an interested response from the principal of Blackwood Elementary School. I met with the principal and Mrs. Wood (the physical education teacher), and they both demonstrated overwhelming enthusiasm for my project. Next, I sought permission to conduct the study in the study through the Co-operative Activities Program at the University of Alberta. To gain their approval, I needed permission from the superintendent of the school board, which was accomplished after making adjustments to the original interview schedule. Following approval from the Co-operative Activities Program, I was able to contact the school to establish a time frame for the project.

Once in the field setting, my first task involved establishing quality relationships with participants. This is essential in determining the quality of data collected within a case study (Ghesquiere et al., 2004). As stated earlier, I developed rapport with the students and their teacher, by spending two weeks as a participant within the Grade 1 class prior to beginning formal observations and interviews with them. In addition to attending physical education classes as an active participant, I was present throughout the

day in the regular classroom. A detailed description of the process of establishing rapport with the participants can be found in Appendix A.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a combination of observation and interview. Observations were completed over a six-week period (following the two-week rapport building period). Having interviewed the principal during the first week, the remainder of the interviews commenced in the third week and continued until the end of the study.

Observation. Observations can provide the opportunity to see things which may not be apparent to those in the setting, to learn about things people may not reveal in an interview, and to understand the context within which participants interact (Patton, 2002). Prior to entering the field and beginning data collection, I engaged in a number of practice observations to sharpen my skills as researcher-as-instrument. These practice observations took place at the children's inclusive physical activity program of which I am the program coordinator. Initially, my observations focused on the participation of one girl with Down syndrome as she engaged in physical activities during her seven to 10 year-old group program. Following a debrief and analysis of the experience, I observed a group of children with and without disabilities aged four to six years as they participated in games and physical activities. Overall, this process provided me with an opportunity to observe both an individual child during her physical activity experience and an entire group, including all of the interactions that took place within that group. Not only did these practice sessions improve my skills as the primary instrument of data collection, but they also increased my level of confidence prior to entering the field.

For the first two weeks (during rapport building), I did not collect formal observational data. I participated in the class in order to develop relationships with the participants and to make informal observations to assist with participant selection. Following this, my role shifted and I became an onlooker and adopted my role as an observer collecting data. Patton (2002) described this role as a non-participant observer, which involves "being in or around an on-going social setting for the purpose of making a qualitative analysis of that setting" (p.262). As a non-participant observer, I described the setting, the activities, and the people who participated in them. Ideally, the observer is an unobtrusive presence to which the participants do not react (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Overall, I think this was achieved as I was positioned on the edge of the stage overlooking the gymnasium. The students appeared to be accustomed to my presence as there were few occasions when they spoke to me on the stage and only one student questioned what I was recording in my notebook.

It can be difficult to determine what to observe when conducting qualitative research. The scope of this case study was relatively broad, so following Patton's (2002) advice, sensitizing concepts were used as a way to initially frame observations. Sensitizing concepts provide direction for the researcher as to how meaning is given to a concept within the setting under investigation (Patton, 2002). I selected two sensitizing concepts to guide my analysis into the phenomenon of inclusion. These sensitizing concepts were *activities* and *interactions*, as they related to inclusion. Activities referred to the actual activities the children were engaged in, whereas interactions involves analysis of the verbal and non-verbal exchanges between students during those activities. Initially, I used these sensitizing concepts to focus on Bret's (the child with a disability)

behaviors. I observed what activities he engaged in, who he was with and the reactions of those around him. Observations were also focused on the participation and interactions of other students who were interviewed.

These initial observations helped me to understand the social environment, as I looked at how students were organized and the resulting patterns of interactions (Patton, 2002). For example, I began to notice that there were certain students with whom others did not want to interact with on a regular basis. As these patterns emerged, I was able to focus my observations more specifically on some of the other children, examining some of their behaviors during activities, and the reactions of other students' and the teacher to these behaviors. Being flexible throughout the data collection process provided me with the freedom to explore these themes as they emerged.

During the observations I also engaged in several informal conversations with participants. For example, I often spoke with Mrs. Low, Brett's aid. She provided me with background information about Bret, and explained why he was occasionally not participating. On one of these occasions of nonparticipation, Bret sat on the stage with me and chatted about participating in physical education. I also spoke with other students as they walked back to class from the gymnasium. Unfortunately, this was not as successful as expected. Not only was the walk back to the classroom extremely short, but also the students were expected to be quiet during this time. This made it very difficult for me to engage them in meaningful conversations. However, there were further opportunities to speak with the students in the classroom as they prepared for lunch and recess. Finally, I chatted informally with Mrs. Wood in the staff room about the planned activities for the day and how certain children were behaving. These informational conversations provided

an invaluable source of contextual information, which enabled me to make sense of the participants' meanings and their involvement in the physical education class in question (cf. Holt & Sparkes, 2001). The informal conversations also served a member-checking purpose (see Trustworthiness/Validity section).

All observations, and notes from informal conversations, were recorded in the form of field notes. Field notes are "the fundamental database for constructing case studies" (Patton, 2002, p. 305) and therefore are an essential component in qualitative research. They "contain what has been seen and heard by the researcher, without interpretation" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.73). An observation journal was used to record field notes, which included a map of the physical layout of the gymnasium (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The use of maps supplemented my observation notes and aided in the description of events.

During each physical education class that I observed, I made brief notes in the observation journal. At the end of each day I spent the half hour drive home reflecting upon the activities and interactions I had observed and recorded during the day. Upon arrival home, I typed my brief notes into electronic format, and wrote thorough extended descriptions based on the prompts I had written during class. As such, I supplemented the brief notes made during the physical education class while they were still fresh in my mind. This process afforded me an opportunity to really reflect on the interactions in the Grade 1 class, which often suggested possible areas of focus for the following day.

Formal Interviews

Formal interviews were conducted using an interview guide with open ended questions. This ensured certain questions were asked of each participant, while allowing some flexibility to explore other topics that arose (Patton, 2002).

In terms of developing the researcher-as-instrument in relation to conducting the interviews, I took a graduate level course in qualitative research methods, during which we engaged in practice interviews with one another to hone our skills as researchers. Prior to beginning data collection for this study, I conducted pilot interviews with two different children. This experience provided me with an opportunity to debrief and evaluate my performance, thus helping me to improve my skills as the primary instrument of data collection. Conducting pilot interviews also assisted me with the interview guide development. The interview guide was initially developed using a number of different studies that involved accessing children's perceptions of physical education (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Ratliffe & Inmwold, 1994; Solomon & Carter, 1995; Vogler, Koranda & Romance, 2000). These studies included children with and without disabilities as participants. The questions were then refined based on the pilot interviews and following recommendations from the school board superintendent (see Appendix B for Interview Guide). The questions presented in the interview guide represent a full list of potential questions; not all questions were asked of all participants.

I was very conscious of the language I used throughout my interactions with the students, regardless if I was establishing rapport, participating in physical education, or conducting an interview. Questions were rephrased to increase a child's understanding of what was being asked. The use of child friendly language increased the probability for

effective communication between researcher and participant (Ginsburg, 1997). The interviews were tape-recorded and field notes were made about the interviews.

Interview with Principal. During the first week, an interview was conducted with the school principal in his office. Adopting a semi-structured format (Patton, 2002), the objective of this interview was to gain an understanding of the school's philosophy toward inclusion and to obtain contextual information about the setting. This interview lasted approximately 35 minutes. A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix B.

Interview with physical education teacher. The physical education teacher was interviewed during the fourth week of fieldwork. Using a semi-structured interview approach, the interview took place in the staff room and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The objective of this interview was to gain an understanding of the teacher's perception of inclusion, the various activities planned for the students, the nature of the interactions among the students, and other information that helped to establish the context of the case. A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix B.

Interview with Bret. Bret was also interviewed during the fourth week to try and understand physical education from the perspective of a child with a disability. A semi-structured format was used with interview topics that included activities Bret engaged in, his attitude and feelings towards physical education, and what it meant to be included, interact and participate with other students in his class. The interview with Bret lasted approximately 25 minutes and was conducted in a small empty office that was very quiet and had few distractions. His aide, Mrs. Low, was present throughout the interview and she assisted in the process. Fox, Farrell, and Davis (2004) also included the teacher or

aide of a child with Down syndrome during the interview process. This was considered an asset by the researchers because the teacher and aide knew the child well and were able to interpret speech that was unclear and helped prompt responses to interview questions. Although Bret's language skills provided him with the tools to carry on a conversation, his ability to comprehend complex topics such as inclusion limited the nature of the interview. It was difficult to gain a clear understanding of inclusion from Bret's perspective as he provided very limited responses that were often off topic. Moreover, his attention was limited due to a short attention span. To access Bret's perspective, Mrs. Low and I interpreted his responses together. This information was supplemented by the informal conversations I had with him and the numerous observations I made in physical education class. A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix B.

Interview with Mrs. Low. Mrs. Low was interviewed during the seventh week of data collection. This interview took place in the staff room and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The objective of this interview was to gain an understanding of Mrs. Low's perception of inclusion, her experience working with Bret and her description of Bret's participation in physical education. A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix B.

*Interviews with other studen*ts. Interviews were conducted with the five students without disabilities during the fourth week of fieldwork and took place at various times throughout the day, depending on the preference of the classroom teacher. The objective of these interviews was to understand their perceptions of inclusion and their attitudes towards physical education. Interviews took approximately 30 minutes. Three interviews

were conducted in the library as it was a quiet room, and two interviews were conduced in the hallway outside the classroom when the library was in use. The list of questions used in the interviews is included in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing throughout the research process. Reflection is an important part of the data analysis process in qualitative research (Patton, 2002), and each day I spent time thinking and processing what had occurred that day and in days before. Neglecting to incorporate ongoing data analysis leaves the researcher with an overwhelming amount of data that potentially lacks focus and is repetitious (Merriam, 1988). Reflecting on and analyzing the data throughout the duration of the case study revealed potential themes to concentrate on during observations and possible directions for interview questions.

Following transcription of all interviews, observations, and field notes, data were organized chronologically into one master file. This was done to make it simple to retrieve the data (Merriam, 1988). Patton (2002) describes this management of data as the case record. The case record was read through several times and I began the inductive process of line-by-line analysis. The purpose of line-by-line analysis is to identify meaningful units of data. Meaningful units are parts of the data that "serve as the basis for defining larger categories of meaning…and must be understandable without additional knowledge, except for knowledge of the researcher's focus of inquiry" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.128). To identify meaningful units, a line was drawn on the photocopy of the data to indicate where the unit of meaning began and ended, thus separating it from other units. To capture the essence of this meaningful unit, a word or

phrase was written in the margin (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The following is an example of a meaningful unit taken from Allen's interview transcript. Choosing friends was originally written in the margin to give meaning to the phrase.

> **Interviewer: Do you still want to be friends with people when they cause interruptions?**
>
> Allen: Um, sometimes no, but sometimes yes. Like if they only do it like once then yes.
>
> **Interviewer: Yah, what about if there was somebody who did interruptions everyday? Would that be a problem?**
>
> Allen: Um, that's when sometimes Cam goes on the stage mostly everyday. So I'm not really friends with him cause he interrupts and stuff.
>
> **Interviewer: So that makes it hard to be friends with him?**
>
> Allen: Uh huh. (p. 1)

As analysis progressed additional meaningful units were identified and coded. Next, the constant comparative technique (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to assess which categories to code the meaningful units into. Essentially, as each unit of meaning was analyzed it was compared to the other units, following which it was either grouped with those with similar meaning or used to form a new group based on a unique meaning. This was a dynamic process as new categories were created, and original ones were modified or eliminated (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Once the initial analysis was completed and categories were identified, the data was read through again. Rules of inclusion were written for each category to determine if the data within each category were reflective of its intended meaning. Rules of inclusion

were statements written to give meaning to the data within a specific category (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). For example, the category of misbehavior was created with the following rule of inclusion: "examples of and attitudes towards misbehavior." The previously stated example of a meaningful unit was included within this category because it became clear that Allen's decision-making process for choosing friends was based on whether the child interrupts during class, which was considered misbehavior. Therefore, Allen's attitude towards misbehavior was such that he did not want to be friends with students who fell within this category. This process continued until a coherent coding scheme that represented the main findings was developed.

Once the data were coded, a more interpretative approach was taken in a final stage of data analysis. The purpose of this further stage of analysis was to attempt to understand how the data 'fit together' (Mandigo & Holt, in press). Within this higher order conceptual process the interpretation of data was taken to a level beyond description. Decisions were made to hypothesize potential relationships between variables and a series of flow charts were developed to aid in this process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This lead to the development of a visual representation of the data which formed the basis for the four sections of data presented in the Results chapter (see Figure 5.1).

Trustworthiness/ Validity

Reflexive journal. In order to keep my bias in check, a reflexive journal was kept throughout the research process. Recorded separate from the observations specific to the case, the reflexive journal helped me to monitor my thoughts, feelings, assumptions and bias. This was an important step in monitoring bias. In addition to reflexive journaling,

discussions with a critical friend occurred on a regular basis (Holt & Sparkes, 2001). This provided an opportunity to discuss my biases openly, and to ponder how they help me to formulate both the purposes of my investigation and the ongoing inquiry (Wolcott, 1995). This part of the process was essential as it helped me to enhance my subjectivity and be aware of my biases in my observations and discussions with participants. At one point I became aware that I was developing a bias towards one of the participants, as it was reflective in my observation notes. However, because I acknowledged this in my journal and spoke with others about it, I was able to address this bias and move on in a more self-aware fashion. This was an important lesson that I learned about the research process. The necessity of acknowledging and dealing with subjectivity is an important element in conducting case study research (Ghesquiere et al., 2004).

Triangulation of data sources. Triangulation of data sources involves using different types of data taken at different times and using different methods, in order to provide consistency by comparing and cross-checking (Patton, 2002). Various data sources were triangulated, including interviews from a variety of perspectives within the boundaries of the case, observations that were conducted over an extended period of time, and field notes which included informal conversations from throughout the period of study. It was not expected that all of these data sources would reveal the same information, however, "finding such inconsistencies ought not be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study" (Patton, 2002, p.556). Triangulation was a great strength of the data collected within this case study. Although ideas expressed by students and adults were sometimes different from each

other, together they provided a holistic description of inclusion within this class. Moreover, accessing multiple perspectives in addition to multiple methods of data collection assisted in establishing trustworthiness of the data.

Member Checking. Another strategy used to develop trustworthiness of the data was member checking. This is simply the process of "taking data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (Merriam, 1988, p.169). Member checks help the researcher ensure they have developed an accurate portrayal of the individual's experiences. Although this process may not reveal a uniform interpretation of the phenomenon among all participants, it is important to ensure the data accurately represents each person's construction of reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Member checking is an ongoing process, especially within a case study in which data collection occurs over an extended period of time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using informal interviews, I spoke to the students and teacher about my interpretations to determine if they were "adequate representations of their own (and multiple) realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.314). The physical education teacher was very supportive in this process as she helped me to understand whether I was accurately interpreting the interactions and descriptions I observed in the Grade 1 class. Conducting member checks also provided the participants an opportunity to clarify anything that was said, as well as my interpretations of observed events.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The findings of this study are presented in four sections. The first section provides an introduction to the key players, thus establishing the boundaries of the case and providing some context for the Grade 1 Physical education class under investigation. The second section looks at the meaning of inclusion from the multiple perspectives accessed in this particular case, and describes the meaning of inclusion according to the themes revealed in the data as opportunities for participation and social engagement. The third section explores factors that influence inclusion in this class. The final section specifically describes the experiences of Bret, a child with Down syndrome, in terms of the opportunities he is afforded for participation and social engagement in this Physical education class.

Similar to the interaction of variables within the conceptual framework of inclusion presented by Goodwin et al. (2003), results of this study are presented in a manner which demonstrates the complex nature of inclusion. The experience of inclusion in this Grade 1 class can be understood within the context of the case. One can understand the experience of Bret by considering the meanings attributed to the concept of inclusion and the factors which influence the experience of those within the environment. It is the interaction of these factors that comprise the results of this study. Figure 5.1 provides a visual representation of the four sections described in the Results chapter.

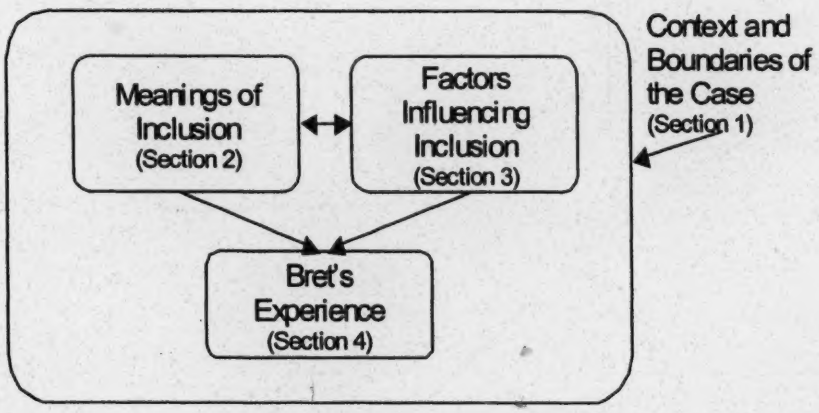
Meanings of Inclusion (Section 2)
Factors Influencing Inclusion (Section 3)
Context and Boundaries of the Case (Section 1)
Bret's Experience (Section 4)

Figure 5.1. Visual representation of overview of findings.

Section 1: Context and Characters of the Case

Establishing the context of the case is an essential element within the case study methodological approach (Merriam, 1988). Providing the reader with the context of the case enhances the transfer of knowledge from the researcher and is one of the elements that combine to create a rich, thick description of the case (Merriam, 1988). The following section begins this process with a broad introduction to the school board's inclusive policies. The scope of the contextual description is then narrowed to the principal and the culture at this particular school, and finally to the key players in the grade one class.

The School Board

At the time of this study, the Grade 1 class under investigation was located in a relatively small school board in Alberta, in a small city located near (within 15 kilometers) a major city. The non-denominational school board included a total of 15 elementary, junior high, and high schools with an enrollment of approximately 6,000

students. Decisions about the inclusion of students with disabilities were made at the school board level in accordance with requirements of Alberta Learning, the provincial governing board. In terms of placement decisions, "the board expects the administration to implement Alberta Learning requirements for regular and special education. The board supports Alberta Learning philosophy that regular classrooms in neighborhood schools be the first placement option used in meeting a student's learning needs" (*St. Albert Protestant Schools Policy Manual*, 1999 p. H-170).

The School

Consistent with the mandate set forth by the provincial governing body and school board, Blackwood Elementary School promoted inclusive education as its first option for placement of students with disabilities. According to the principal, the focus of the school was to:

> Look after the best interests of the kids, so if a child is able to be included where he or she will benefit from it and will not intrude on the learning of the group, then we will do everything to make that happen.

In describing the school's inclusive history, the principal stated:

> It's my understanding that's it always been that way here, I know I've been here, it's my sixth year, so for the past six years it's happened, but it also happened before that. The school's 25 years old and I can say for sure for at least 10 that it's happened.

The school's commitment to inclusion was illustrated through an example provided by the principal, in which a boy with autism was included in his grade five class's outdoor education field trip.

> It was a pretty major initiative for the school, dodging sort of the hurdles facility wise and so on and convincing the parents that it was going to work. Huge commitment from the staff… Like with an average group of kids, you're pretty well used to how things generally will go, you'll have a few homesick kids, you're going to have some scraped knees but with kids who are more non-verbal it's a little harder maybe to feel comfortable. But you just put more resources into it to make it happen and make it work.

To gain support for the school's inclusive approach from parents of students without disabilities, the principal described inclusion as "an opportunity for your child to experience differences, show tolerance, understanding, all those things." He went on to say that "in six years I've had two parents raise concerns about a child being included and they were able to be convinced by just saying, give us a month, watch it happen and it's worked." Overall, the support from parents was also described as varying "from just acceptance to real enthusiasm and I've had parents say, 'boy, what a neat thing it is having that child in the class'."

Because Blackwood Elementary School is located in a school board with open borders, parents are able to choose which school their child attends. Children are not restricted to attending school in the specific zone in which they live. For the principal of Blackwood Elementary School, inclusion was considered to be a selling point for prospective parents. "Once we get people in the door for whatever reason, the atmosphere, the kids, the setting, or the inclusiveness, that aspect, they come in the door, they end up registering." At Blackwood Elementary School, inclusion was considered to

be an important element of the school's philosophy, and school officers strived to make it work whenever possible.

The Class

It is important to understand the dynamics that make this specific Grade 1 class unique in order to establish the boundaries of this case (Stake, 2000). There was a wide range of abilities within the class, but rather than using disability as the reference point for describing the range of abilities of the students, the students were presented in terms of the various developmental levels. Mrs. Wood, the physical education teacher, referred to this range of abilities throughout her interview as we spoke about physical abilities, social interactions, and behavior. Mrs. Wood considered a wide range of abilities as characteristic of early grades such as Grade 1. "They will catch up I find, by the time they get to Grade 3, they, they're pretty much at the same level, but right now in Grade 1 it's really noticeable who socially is there and who isn't."

Based on two years experience teaching Grade 1 physical education and 10 years experience overall, Mrs. Wood commented that the students in her current class were "behavior wise a little more trouble and this year may be an exception. There are some kids, a few more kids that have trouble this year than I remember last year." It is important to appreciate that there were a number of students who stood out. When asked to discuss the characteristics that make this apparent, Mrs. Wood replied:

> To me the ones who stand out are the ones who are acting out or have a negative behavior or the ones who have a super positive behavior… those are the two that I notice most and it's the ones in the middle that just kind of go along and just kind of do what they're told.

In this example, Mrs. Wood was referring to the class in general rather than making any specific references to children with or without disabilities.

The Adults

There were two key adults involved in the physical education class examined in this study. These were Mrs. Wood, the physical education teacher, and Mrs. Low, Bret's full time aide. The Grade 1 students had a different teacher for their classroom subjects, however since she was not present during physical education, she was not included as a key player in this study.

Mrs. Wood. Mrs. Wood had been teaching inclusive physical education for the last three years of her 10-year career. At Blackwood Elementary School she was a physical education specialist and thus dedicated her time to providing a quality physical education program. Mrs. Wood was an enthusiastic teacher who wanted to "make kids feel really good about coming and right now grade ones all just want to be there and hopefully that continues on." Throughout the last three years, Mrs. Wood has attended a variety of professional development workshops to increase her knowledge of inclusive physical education. She recalled that she had done "…some PD (professional development)… through workshops, through their special challenges, you know including, you know what you can do to include kids more, to include kids with disabilities." She was well liked and respected by the grade ones as they all looked forward to physical education.

Mrs. Low. Mrs. Low had worked as Bret's personal aide in the classroom and the gym for three years. Mrs. Low described her relationship with Bret as "amazing, he listens really well to me, yet he likes me." She assisted Bret when necessary and stepped

back to allow him to develop independence when possible. Mrs. Low really enjoyed working with Bret and seeing him progress, and she said, "You know I'd like to say that I'm pretty lucky having a kid like Bret who's awesome to work with and it's fun because he's one of the kids that has potential to learn so much, so it's really encouraging." Like Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Low had attended some professional development workshops, and she commented:

> There are courses that come up that you can watch for and usually there's funding through the school for things like that. Um, one I took was Handwriting Without Tears that came. There's been different courses on autism that I've taken, even though Bret is Down syndrome, some of the things still apply to a child like Bret, some of the sensory things.

Although Mrs. Low was very good with Bret in the classroom, her experience appeared to be somewhat limited in the gym environment due to a lack of specific training in physical education.

The Students

The following vignettes describe the key students who feature in the descriptions provided later in this chapter. Bret is the child with a disability. The other children (Allen, Niles, Maya, Tina, Carl, and Stu) are those who participated in the individual interviews. The final three children (Cam, Eleisa, and Ann) did not participate in individual interviews, but interacted with Bret frequently and are included in many of the observations.

Bret. Bret is a child with Down syndrome. With support from his aide Mrs. Low he participated in the regular classroom and in the gym wherever possible. Overall, Bret

appeared to be well liked by his classmates and was involved with peers at recess and in physical education. On occasion his behavior was disruptive. For example, he poked other students, scribbled on the work of others, and sometimes kicked. This behavior was only observed in the regular classroom and reported in stories about recess.

Allen. Allen was a positive student who was very intelligent and well spoken. He was very understanding of Bret and the nature of his disability. He liked to participate in physical education, loved hockey, and enjoyed spending time with his friends. Allen communicated well with both adults and other students, which enhanced the interview process. He was a very helpful, responsible student who was often called upon to perform various classroom duties.

Niles. Niles was a very well behaved boy in the eyes of his teacher, Mrs. Wood, as he strived to stay away from peers who might reflect poorly on him. He was the son of the kindergarten teacher in the neighboring classroom. Niles loved soccer and being involved in various games. His tendency to stay away from those who may not reflect the best behavior sometimes impacted his interactions in that he was not very accepting of others.

Maya. Maya was a very happy girl who enjoyed being a leader within her group of friends. Some may describe her as bossy, but she was extremely bright and pleasant to be around. She enjoyed participating in physical education and was often recognized by both Mrs. Wood and her classroom teacher for her good behavior. Although she had a tendency to be a chatterbox, Maya was very aware of the adult expectations of being a good listener.

Tina. Tina was a very talkative young girl who often sought adult approval. She was less mature socially than some of the other girls and tended to be left out as a result. Upon arrival of a new female student, she enjoyed taking on the expert role and teaching this new student how to fit into the Grade 1 class.

Carl. Carl was a student who responded well in a one on one setting, however, he had difficulties in group settings. He often had trouble listening and paying attention, thus impacting his ability to follow instructions. Although he identified other students as friends, he appeared to be socially isolated from others. He was left out at recess and consistently not chosen to be partners in physical education.

Stu. Stu had trouble controlling his impulsive behaviours. He seemed to be very excited about everything at school, loved being involved, and therefore had trouble waiting to be called upon before speaking. His willingness to tell stories in the interview exceeded that exhibited by the other students both in terms of the number of stories he offered and the depth of his descriptions. While a very fun, enjoyable student, he was often singled out for speaking out of turn and failing to listen to instructions.

Other Key Players

Cam. Cam was a student who struggled on a daily basis. He had a great deal of trouble concentrating and completing his work in the classroom. Cam displayed emotional outbursts, he struggled to pay attention, and he consistently forgot basic classroom rules such as putting his hand up before speaking. This behavior transferred over to the gym as he was often sent to sit on the stage for failing to follow instructions.

Eliesa. Eliesa was a very pleasant student who got along with almost everyone. She was very sweet and did not appear to have any trouble working with others. She was

well liked by both students and adults and was frequently seen with her arm around a friend planning activities for recess or after school like tag on the outdoor climber. She is another example of a student who demonstrated consistently good behavior.

Ann. Ann was a girl who seemed to alternate between playing with the boys and playing with the girls. She loved to be active and play sports although she still wore a dress on occasion. She got along with everyone and made an effort to befriend those in the class who were sometimes challenging to get along with. She developed a friendship with Bret that was evident in the classroom and at recess.

Section 2: The Meaning of Inclusion

Having established the context of the case, the Results will now focus on the meaning of inclusion, attempting to portray the participants' perspective by using their 'voice' wherever possible. Overall, data indicated that inclusion meant providing opportunities (a) to participate, and (b) for social engagement. These themes became apparent through interviews with the adults and students and they were corroborated through observations and field notes.

Opportunities to Participate

In this class, inclusion meant that all children had the opportunity to participate in activities in physical education. For example, Mrs. Wood (the physical education teacher) described her philosophy of inclusion:

> To me it means that every student has the opportunity to participate no matter what level they're at… I think that everybody needs to be able to participate, that's what encompasses my whole philosophy, it doesn't just mean kids with disabilities because there are so many kids with different abilities that don't even

have a disability, they're just not developmentally at the same level as everybody else.

Mrs. Low (Bret's aide) and the principal provided similar descriptions of the meaning of inclusion. Mrs. Low described inclusion as "keeping the child (with a disability) in the class as much as you can." Similarly, the principal said, "So if a child is able to be included where he or she will benefit from it and will not intrude on the learning of the group, then we will do everything to make that happen."

The meaning of inclusion expressed by the adults was supported by observational data. Bret was present in physical education class on all of the days I observed unless he was away from school for other reasons (e.g., due to sickness). The only occasions where Bret was not included in parts of the physical education class was due to his misbehavior (which will be further explored in Section 3). Regarding the provision of opportunities for participation, I made the following observations in my field notes, during observation #8, the first day of the unit on scoops and paddles:

> Majority of time is spent doing a variety of individual lead up activities to progress to working with a partner. Kids begin exploring the scoop and ball, trying to throw their ball in air and catch it, bounce it, etc. Then trying to see how many times they can throw the ball in the air and catch it in a row. They progress to bouncing it once and catching it to bouncing the ball multiple times and catching it. They pass to themselves off the wall. They then start passing with a partner. They are challenged to pass together as many times as possible without dropping the ball. (April 4, 2005, Field notes, pg. 33)

This example showed that Mrs. Wood created opportunities for the entire class to participate by implementing an activity with a range of choices for various skill levels. Since there were a variety of choices, each child was able to choose a task within the activity with a level of difficulty attainable for their individual level.

Although inclusion was a difficult concept for the children to describe, it appeared that the opportunity to participate was the commonly shared defining element. For example, Allen said, "I know what included means. It means letting other people be in it," which shows that he identified an opportunity to participate as his understanding of what inclusion means. Tina used an example to describe a time when she felt included by referring back to her first day of school, saying that, "I thought I was included when I came in…cause when I got there we played this game and we rolled a ball and I say 'hi I'm Tina' and they say their name." She was provided with the opportunity to participate in the welcoming game, which facilitated her feelings of inclusion within the class. Similarly, Maya described inclusion as "It means like you're always in something…and that's supposed to happen." She then used an example specific to physical education to enhance her description of inclusion: "everybody getted [*sic*] to use the parachute." The descriptions provided suggest a connection between having the opportunity to participate in an activity and feeling included.

Some of the students who found it more difficult to define what it meant to be included were able to demonstrate an understanding of the concept by describing situations in which opportunities to participate were denied. For example, Stu explained it was important to feel included in physical education, "Because, if you're not included and you really want to and there's enough games for you to play and they don't want you to

and that's not included." The following example demonstrates how opportunities to participate play an important role in the definition of inclusion for the students. Carl (a student who has difficulty in group learning environments) reported that he feels included in physical education "cause I am part of the class." Although Carl felt in included in physical education, he was denied the opportunity to participate in another physical activity setting. Tina described an incident in which she was outside at recess playing tag with a couple of friends. Carl wanted to join in the game, however "Noel said 'we don't want you to play' so he [Carl] felt not included." Tina continued explaining that she "didn't say no, I wanted him [Carl] to play. I keep saying 'stop saying that, stop saying that' but they keep saying that." In other words, Tina wanted Carl to be able to participate, however, despite her efforts; he was excluded from the game.

Opportunities for Social Engagement

Inclusion was also explained in terms of providing opportunities for social engagement. Opportunities for participation referred more to physical placement of the students within the physical education environment, whereas opportunities for social engagement refer to the experiences of students interacting within the environment. The adults in this study did not seem to consider the influence of social interactions in the meaning of inclusion. Mrs. Wood discussed the wide range of students in her class; however, she did not specifically refer to the role of social interactions in understanding inclusion.

> There's such a wide range of students with varying levels not just developmentally but socially and especially at the Grade 1 level there are some

kids that are very responsible and very mature and independent yet there are some kids that can't work well in groups.

According to Mrs. Wood, this range of abilities is more apparent in Grade 1 than any other grade. Mrs. Wood discussed the role physical education plays in affording children the opportunity to learn how to interact with others. In Grade 1, learning these social skills was almost considered more important than learning traditional motor skills. Mrs. Wood explained:

> You know what happens when you come into the gym and how you interact with each other and how you co-operate and get along so uh, what sportsmanship is what fair play is, so ya, there's a lot more concentration on that rather than the skills, the skills come with that.

Despite identifying the importance of learning the aforementioned skills, Mrs. Wood did not refer to these social skills as influencing inclusion within physical education.

Responses from the children, however, highlighted the role of being with others, or the social nature of inclusion. Maya and Stu identified spending time with others as being an important element in feeling included. Maya stated that she feels included "cause then you get to spend time with the other kids." When describing a time when he felt included, Stu highlighted the reason why he felt this way. "We had to spend a lot of time together and that was kind of like being included." During a discussion of the meaning of inclusion with Bret, he identified a distinction between being with others and being by himself as a defining element. He said that he felt like a part of the class when he was with others compared to when he was by himself. When Bret plays he prefers to play with "lots of people." Tina referred back to the first day of school as she described

how making friends made her feel like she was part of the class. "Like the first day of school I went into school with Maura cause we used to laugh together and tickle each other. She was the first one who I was friends with." Tina expressed feeling like she belonged and was included in the class because she was able to make friends.

The following examples demonstrate ways in which the nature of physical education activities provides opportunities for the students to spend time with one another and to develop friendships. The influence of partner activities and choosing partners will be further discussed in Section Four. I made the following observations in my field notes.

> During Mission Impossible, observation #3, Bret and Stu had the opportunity to be partners. At 1:33, it's Bret's turn to climb the A- frame climber. He does so with help from Mrs. Low. Stu gives him a high 5 at the end. Stu makes sure Bret is in line for the balls by putting his arms around him. Stu runs the ball back for Bret when he's done. Stu continues to show Bret where to go. At 1:46, the end of class, Bret and Stu are sitting side by side with their arms around one another. Back in class, in the good- bye circle, everyone has to say what their favorite part of the day was. Stu said it was "Being Bret's partner in gym" with his arm around Bret. Bret said his favorite thing was "Gym." (March 14, 2005, Field notes, p.11)

Observation #11, the Grade 1 class was divided into teams to play outdoor soccer. "At 2:35, Elisa and Maya hold hands and jump around to celebrate being on the same team" (April 12, 2005, Field notes, p. 59). Observation #6, the grade ones are participating in a variety of different Easter themed activity stations. "At the bunny toss station at 2:56, Elisa and Mick are talking, jumping around, smiling at each other in line. Bret's groups cheers loudly for him as he hits a bunny" (March 22, 2005, Field notes, 21).

According to the students in Grade 1, inclusion means having the opportunity to spend time with others and engage in social interactions.

Summary

In summary, the thematic analysis of the interview data revealed that the meaning of inclusion in this first grade class can be understood as providing all students with the opportunities to participate in physical education and to engage in social interactions. These are two different ideas, as the first one simply provides the basic initial opportunity to physically be in the gym environment whereas the second refers more to what happens within that environment. This implies that inclusion might be more than just placement.

Section 3: Factors That Influence Inclusion

This third section provides a look at the factors that influence inclusion in this particular Grade 1 class. First, a portrayal of the class' participation is presented, followed by a description of fairness as an element of participation within the inclusive process. Opportunities for social engagement are described in terms of the various social interactions that take place in this class, for example, during partner activities. This is followed by an overview of the students' thought processes when choosing partners. Finally, misbehavior appeared to be the most significant factor that affected a student's opportunities to participate and for social engagement. It is presented in terms of how it influences these opportunities.

Participation

According to the students, everyone typically participated in the same activity together in physical education. Stu described students participating together, "all the time, the kids play the same games." Two exceptions were identified in which students

did not participate together. The first was directly related to the nature of the activity. For example, Maya referred to activities set up in a station format where small groups of students move from one activity to the next. The students learn to work independently as she says, "we can start wherever we want and we end at the same thing… we just go to all the stations every time." The Mission Impossible unit is an example of station activities. It was comprised of stations that the students moved through with partners, completing various activities (e.g., swinging across ropes, climbing ladders, traversing the climbing wall, moving through obstacles on the floor). Observation #2 coincided with the first day Mission Impossible was set up. The following observation was recorded in my field notes.

> At 3:10pm, after explaining the various activities, Mrs. Wood said "I'll count to 10, go where you're going to start". At this point the students choose their own partners and together decide on which part of the course they will start. Having different starting points ensures the students are continuously active rather than everyone standing in line waiting for the next group to finish. This also takes away the focus of the entire class watching each pair go through the course. Everyone is focused on himself or herself. At 3:20, Ann spots her partner Bret as he attempts the climbing wall, showing Bret where to put his hands. Mrs. Low stands off to the side. Bret is very unsuccessful and Mrs. Low says, "That's too tough" so Ann and Bret move on to the next activity. At 3:23, Ann shows Bret what to do on the A frame ladder. They both attempt it together. (March 9, 2005, Field notes, p.7)

This example illustrates that students were able to participate in the gym together, at the same time, through the provision of choices within the activity. This is consistent with Mrs. Wood's teaching philosophy, "I've always believed in giving kids choices and stuff and lots of variety."

Fairness

Fairness was identified as an important element within the activities that the Grade 1 students participated in. This became apparent when students described a time when they felt included. Allen began by describing an occasion during a relay when he didn't feel included. "When um, people play fair, because sometimes they'll like skip a person just to get it to their best friend even though if they're supposed to like, uh, high five the person that's just right in front of them, not like behind the other person… and that's like not included." To help clarify his thoughts, Allen used a similar example to describe an occasion when he felt included, "It's actually about Cam, when he high fived me… even though I wasn't his best friend." Allen's examples highlight the element of fairness as one in which you treat everyone equally, regardless of their friendship status. Niles also incorporated friendship into his description of a time when he felt included "Um, when I fell Jamie helped me up, cause he's one of my best friends in the class, one of my top ten." To help describe why he felt included in this situation, Niles explained, "Cause that's good sportsmanship and they're not going 'ha ha you fell down'." Despite identifying good sportsmanship and fairness as important elements, Niles was observed in observation #5 preventing Carl from taking his final turn in Mission Impossible. "At 10:31, Niles won't let Carl have a turn 'doing'. There are only two minutes left in class and Carl yells "it's my turn" (March 18, 2005, Field notes, p.20).

Mrs. Wood played a role in physical education to ensure that fairness was part of the activities. Maya discussed Mrs. Wood's responsibility to make sure "everybody gets a turn in gym and everybody gets to join in, unless they have to sit on the stage." Mrs. Wood promoted this idea of fair play and sportsmanship throughout the class. Following a day of playing soccer, in observation #7, the teams had to shake hands and say something positive to each person on the other team. There were also examples of students playing fair and taking turns. I made the following observations in my field notes during observation #3, when Bret and Stu were participating together in Mission Impossible. "At 1:27, Stu says, 'Bret, it's my turn.' Stu tells Bret it's his turn to climb the A-frame climber, Bret waits at the other end watching Stu. 'Good job' Bret says to Stu" (March 14, 2005, Field notes, p.14). Given that Mrs. Low had earlier commented that it was difficult for Bret to take turns, this example was significant as it highlighted his ability to take turns and play fair.

On another occasion, prior to beginning a soccer game in observation #11, Stu and Ann demonstrated good sportsmanship and friendship. "At 2:36, they say to each other, 'Good luck Ann' 'Good luck Stu'. They are each goalies for different teams playing side by side, and not against one another. They give each other thumbs up" (April 12, 2005, Field notes, p. 59). This example showed that the students were capable of demonstrating good sportsmanship in their activities. Fairness was observed to be an element that was encouraged by Mrs. Wood and on occasion put into action by the first graders.

Social Interactions

Partner activities provided opportunities for students to participate together and for social interactions to occur. Often the students were observed choosing their own partners. However, to increase the variety of social interactions, Mrs. Wood said "I think it's really important to mix them up a lot, and I need to do that more I think, focus on different ways to get them in groups, different ways to get them in partners." Contrary to this, throughout the Mission Impossible unit students were instructed to choose their own partners. Following these instructions, there were often a couple of students who were left wandering around the gym looking for a partner. On the first day of Mission Impossible, observation #2, I recorded the following in my field notes.

> At 3:10, the kids choose their own partners and together decide on which part of the course they will start. Dave and Carl appear to be left over from choosing partners. Carl is wondering around in the middle of the gym, Dave comes up to Mrs. Wood and she pairs the two together. (March 9, Field notes, p. 9)

This continued to happen the next day. During observation #3, the following was recorded in my field notes.

> At 1:16, the kids are instructed to pick a partner. Everyone picks a friend and Bret is left wandering around. Mrs. Wood asks, "Bret, do you need a partner?" Stu, who was sent to sit on the stage for speaking out of turn, puts up his hand on the stage. "Bretty!!" He then runs over to Bret to be his partner. (March 14, Field notes, p.14)

Regardless whether it was because Mrs. Wood acknowledged in her interview that she needed to mix partners up more often or because of the nature of the following

unit, students were no longer instructed to find their own partner. Mrs. Wood began pairing students up based on the color of ball or scoop they were holding. It is interesting to note that this method did not come without problems. During observation #8, following an individual activity in which the students were each playing with a different colored ball and scoop; they were instructed to find a partner who had the same colored ball. Similar to other occasions when students selected partners on their own, the following was observed in my field notes.

> At 1:35 Cam and Carl don't have partners. Carl comes up to Mrs. Wood to tell her he doesn't have a partner. She points out Noel who has the same colored ball, but Carl says that Noel doesn't want to be his partner. Mrs. Wood tells Noel to come over and be Carl's partner and they will work well together. Noel has a very unhappy expression on his face, but he and Carl appear to have a good time playing together as they're smiling and talking and playing together. While this half of the example demonstrated some problems, other students had a more positive experience with this system. At 1:36, Stu and Cam are partners, put together by Mrs. Wood. They both throw the ball high and far and drop the ball, but they seem to be having fun as they laugh and smile. (April 4, 2005, Field notes, p. 35)

Stu and Cam were two students who had been left out in the past when it came time to choose partners. Thus with the help of Mrs. Wood, they were a good match. It appeared that whether students chose their own partners, or whether a strategy such as finding another person with the same colored ball was used, problems arose. This is not surprising given the wide range of maturity levels and social skills exhibited by the

students. Mrs. Wood described this Grade 1 class as including "some kids who are really able to work in groups and there are some who have trouble, even just with one partner."

After observing the variety of interactions among the students, I wanted to find out what was important to them when choosing a partner. There appeared to be a possible relationship between choosing partners and deciding whom to be friends with. When choosing a partner in physical education, the students would like to be with someone who is their friend. When establishing friendships and choosing partners, it was important to the students in Grade 1 that their partner or friend is someone with good behavior. When asked what she thought about when choosing a partner, Maya, a student who was never without a friend by her side, said, "Well I think if they're going to be bad or good." This sentiment was echoed by Niles, who described an ideal partner as one who plays fair and abides by the rules. This was based on a past experience, "Cause once I went with Cam and when he talked in Mission Impossible he said 'no I don't want to go back to the beginning' and when we started he just went again and I never got a turn." Cam typically misbehaved in Physical education and his lack of consideration for the rules laid out in Mission Impossible caused Niles to miss out on his opportunity to participate.

On another occasion during Mission Impossible, observation #4, Niles went to great lengths to avoid being partners with Carl. As he and Carl wandered around without partners Niles appeared to beg Stu to be his partner. He avoided being partners with Carl who then followed along in Mission Impossible without a partner. The next day, their classroom teacher was filling in for Mrs. Wood. She paired the students up her herself and Niles found himself partners with Carl. He made his feelings towards being Carl's partner very clear in the following example from observation #5 in my field notes.

10:18 it's time to switch partners and Niles and Carl are partners. Niles is not happy about this as he frowns at Carl who is climbing across the pommel horse. He waits for Carl with his back turned away and doesn't follow him to the next activity right away.

10:19, Niles stands at the edge of the horizontal climbing bars and starts playing around as Carl climbs across. He gives Carl a high five at the end of it, but not a smile. There's no interaction between them as Carl waits for his turn at the climbing wall. Niles starts climbing on the wall ahead of Carl, Niles then starts spotting Carl off and on. Niles doesn't appear interested in his partner at all. He walks ahead, doesn't look at Carl or talk to him and plays on the equipment as he waits. Despite Niles' attitude, Carl tries to be a good partner.

10:27 it's Niles's turn to be 'doing' (They take turns completing the activities in Mission Impossible). Carl helps move the pylons closer for Niles. He watches him and follows alongside. Carl talks to Niles as he climbs across the horizontal climber. Carl talks to him as he climbs on the climbing wall. Carl watches Niles and follows along with him but Niles continues to ignore Carl. (March 18, 2005, Field notes, p.23).

Allen referred to Cam as he described his reasoning behind choosing friends. "Cam goes on the stage mostly everyday. So I'm not really friends with him cause he interrupts and stuff." The important factor for Allen was the frequency of the misbehavior, as he was willing to be friends with someone whose misbehavior was an insolated incident. When observing Allen's behavior, it appeared as though he did not want to be associated in any way with students who did not follow the rules. While

listening to instructions in physical education in observation #8, "Carl gets up to move closer to Mrs. Wood and ends up sitting really close to Allen who immediately turns his back on Carl, and then moves away to sit with Jamie" (April 4, 2005, Field notes, p. 33). The example showed that Allen made a significant move among his classmates to avoid being associated with a student who misbehaved.

Remarks from the students were supported by comments from Mrs. Wood as she explained; "The kids who are following the rules very rarely will choose a student in the class who doesn't follow the rules. It's always the one who doesn't follow the rules is partnered up with one who doesn't follow the rules." In observation #10 I made the following observations in my field notes.

> At 10:13, the kids are instructed to find partners with a matching scoop color. Tina is very reluctantly paired with Carl and her expression is not too happy. The activity is to try to toss the ball to a partner. There's a hoop between them and the ball is supposed to bounce once in the hoop before getting to the partner. At 10:16, Tina moves very slowly, almost reluctantly to play with Carl. They fight over whose ball to use. Carl is being bossy as he directs Tina where to go and he points to where she should be standing. She retreats to the wall of the gym. Carl gives up, sits against the wall and says, "She's not playing fair" to Mrs. Wood. That Tina wasn't standing in the right place. Mrs. Wood talks to them and straightens things out so they can play. (April 8, 2005, Field notes, p.42)

This example demonstrated that Tina, a well-behaved student who made every effort to follow the rules, was very disgruntled when selected to be partners with Carl, a student

who consistently had trouble following the rules. Had there been a choice, Tina would likely not have chosen Carl as a partner.

Misbehavior

The other situation in which students did not participate together, involved misbehavior. Maya said "everybody gets a turn in gym and everybody gets to join in, unless they have to sit on the stage." Sitting on the stage was a consequence for misbehavior, as the students were not allowed to participate in physical education while there. This was usually a temporary consequence as they were often allowed to continue with their participation at some point during the class. For example, the following was recorded in my field notes at the beginning of class during observation #3.

> Stu gets excited and starts crawling towards the end of the mat set up for Mission Impossible. He makes a noise and someone says, "shush". The students have no problem attempting to monitor the behavior of one another. Stu then begins rolling along the mat and at this point Mrs. Wood says, "You know what Stu? You have to sit on the stage". When it comes time to choose partners and begin Mission Impossible, Stu is allowed to participate (March 14, 2005, Field notes, p.13).

Sitting on the stage was not a desirable place to be for the students as it symbolized those who misbehaved and who were not included in physical education. Tina identified Cam as a student who was consistently on the stage as she explained, "Mostly he has to go on the stage and it's kind of sad cause he has to miss out on some games." In terms of her participation in physical education, "I don't like sometimes being out in games…cause if I be bad, but I never do mostly and I go on the stage, I'm not

included in games or anything for like an hour, couple of minutes or ten minutes." Tina explained that she does not like being excluded from games and she knows that by misbehaving, she will not have that opportunity to participate. It was this lost opportunity that she described as sad for Cam. In this Grade 1 class, the opportunity to participate in physical education appeared to be limited due to misbehavior rather than resulting from a disability.

A distinction is made in the class between those who followed the rules and those who did not. Following the rules was considered an important element for evaluation purposes in physical education as students learned about structure, routine, and listening in addition to the various physical activities. As she discussed those who do and do not follow rules in Grade 1, Mrs. Wood was clear in her description of Bret. "It's not Bret that I'm worried about not following the rules, its other kids." She continued, "It seems like they've either chosen whether they'll follow rules or not follow rules, but then there are moments that they really want to follow the rules, but for the most part, they're having trouble."

One of the most important factors that appeared to influence inclusion was behavior, or more specifically, misbehavior. This seemed to be a significant factor in limiting a student's opportunity to participate and thus be included in physical education. Misbehavior limited opportunities to participate, and it influenced how the Grade 1 students chose their friends and partners. Participation was viewed as desirable in this Grade 1 class, as the students described situations where students were denied participation in physical education as a consequence for misbehavior as "missing out on fun stuff." In the words of Tina, it was important to feel included in physical education

because "sometimes we're doing fun things and you don't want to be left out." Not only were students prevented from participating, but according to Allen "like right now it's Mission Impossible and it's really fun, so if someone didn't get included they would feel really bad." Allen associated negative feelings with not being included. According to Tina, Mrs. Wood made everyone feel included by sending those who misbehaved to sit on the stage. "Sometimes she has to say go sit on the stage cause they are being bad so they're not included. Sometimes when we was I think doing this game there was like 10 people on the stage at once, she called all 10 people on the stage cause parachute games they all went under and they wasn't supposed to I think and they climbed on top." Ultimately, Mrs. Wood wanted all of the students to have an opportunity to participate in the activities. However, this was an interesting comment. According to Tina, in this example Mrs. Wood denied students who were misbehaving the opportunity to participate to improve the experience for other students.

The only observed situation in which Bret was denied an opportunity to participate in physical education was when he misbehaved. During observation #9, Bret was late for physical education because he had scribbled all over Ann's duotang during class. He arrived five minutes late and after apologizing to Ann, was permitted to join in and participate for the rest of the class. Missing out on physical education for misbehavior was not exclusive to Bret. Carl's participation was sometimes restricted due to misbehavior in class. He described a time when he was not included in physical education, "when I'm not finished, sometimes I get in trouble… I don't feel bad if I'm not included or anything."

Misbehavior had the potential to limit students' opportunities to participate; it influenced their ability to engage in social interactions and ultimately it affected their ability to be included in this Grade 1 physical education class.

Section 4: Bret's Experience with Inclusion in Physical Education

In this final section, a portrayal of the experiences of Bret, a boy with Down syndrome in physical education will be presented. It is one of the key elements to understanding inclusion in this class. Bret's experience is explored through observations, interviews with Mrs. Low, Mrs. Wood, and a few classmates, and through informal conversations with Bret. This will be supplemented with information from Bret's formal interview; however, the responses from that process were quite limited. Overall, Bret's opportunities to participate were influenced by two main factors. The first related to the nature of the activity in physical education, for example, whether it was a group, individual, or partner activity. The second related to Mrs. Low and her role with Bret. His opportunities for social engagement were predominately influenced by the nature of the interactions, or more specifically, whether they were of a helping nature or equal status.

Bret typically participated with the other students; however, his level of participation appeared to change based on the nature of the activity. According to Mrs. Low, "something like soccer or floor hockey, it's a little intimidating because a lot of the kids are really… into the game, competitive, so then I notice that he will back off or 'I've had it, I'll sit down'." The following observation is an excellent example of Bret's participation in a competitive, group activity such as soccer. During observation #7, I made the following observations as two games of soccer were played simultaneously.

3:15 Bret kind of wanders around on the 'field' while the rest of the kids chase the ball. The action is on the wall side and Bret is the only kid on the opposite side of the boundary. He's distracted by the other game, then watches his own game and appears to be enjoying himself even though he's not really involved. He's making excited 'yes' arm movements. As soon as Mrs. Wood says, 'Freeze', Bret sits. She tells both sides to 'switch goalies.' Bret immediately runs over to the other game to switch teams. After being directed back to his team by Mrs. Low, he continues to stay along the sidelines. He moves his head to avoid getting hit and makes no attempt to touch the ball or interact with anyone. He appears quite content as he wanders around, making his arm signals, watching everyone.

3:17 Bret tries to come over and sit on the stage with Mrs. Low, who is sitting with me. She says, 'Stay awhile longer.' At this point she tells me that Bret is doing better than usually in a group game like soccer, normally he would have given up far earlier.

3:18 Bret who is on the blue team, tries to go in net when it's time to switch goalies, but then Dave, who is on the red team, tries to go in the same net. Mrs. Low steps in to clear the confusion and Dave goes back to playing for the red team and Bret stays in net.

3:20 The ball goes in the net behind Bret and he cheers. The game continues on and no one seems to care that Bret let the ball in or that he cheered. Ann runs up to Bret and randomly gives him a high five and a hug.

3:22 Bret gets tired of being in net and stands to the side so the net is wide open. Maya notices and steps in. Cam makes a good save and Elisa comments

'good save Cam'. The blue teams switch nets so the kids are playing against different teams.

3:29 Bret is sitting on the sidelines against the wall. (March 23, 2005, Field notes, p. 29)

The preceding example highlights Bret's tendency to shy away from participation in a competitive activity. During the game he was provided with opportunities to participate, yet, he chose not to participate for the majority of the game. However, there was no direct intervention from Mrs. Wood or Mrs. Low (other than brief encouragement from Mrs. Low). This was surprising given that Mrs. Low had stated previously that Bret finds activities like soccer to be particularly challenging and he is likely to give up in such situations.

In general, Bret seemed to enjoy participating with others. For example, in observation #10, Bret and Ryan were partners for an activity that involved passing with scoops and balls. Ryan is a good athlete, a strong student academically, and he has a nice personality. I did not observe Ryan and Bret interacting on many occasions, but on this day he was very willing to be Bret's partner. I made the following observations in my field notes.

10:18 Bret and Ryan are playing really well together with Mrs. Low looking on. They don't have a hoop between them; Bret seems to be having a hard enough time without one. Mrs. Low is giving lots of verbal encouragement. The activity changes to continuing to catch with a partner, this time without the hoop and without the ball bouncing.

10:20 Bret is smiling lots, and so is Ryan. They both appear to be having fun. Ryan is diving for the ball and Bret responds by smiling. Ryan can catch some of Bret's tosses (at least Bret can be successful this way). Ryan starts rolling his passes to Bret, which increases Bret's success as he can trap the ball on the floor. The scoops are put away and traded in for paddle bats and balloons. With a partner they practice passing back and forth. They have the option to use the net or to trade in the balloon for a pickle ball if they're ready.

10:26 Ryan encourages Bret by saying 'Bret, hit it to me!' and 'Good job' when he did. They successfully pass the balloon in the air part of the time, at least enough for them to be happy.

10:29 Bret is totally engaged playing with Ryan. He hardly looks to Mrs. Low. (April 8, 2005, Field notes, p.55)

In this activity, the social demands were relatively simple as Bret and Ryan knew their respective roles in working with one another. In addition, the activity was simple and non competitive. Perhaps these clear expectations in terms of working with one other person while participating in a simple activity helped to facilitate Bret's participation.

When asked about his participation in physical education, Bret said that he always participated with other kids, rather than doing activities on his own. In contrast, Mrs. Low stated, "There's definitely things that he's more into than others. So the teams like a game of soccer that's a bit tough, he'd rather go and kick a ball with one person." Perhaps games such as soccer were too complex for Bret to participate. Even some warm up games, such as Fox tag involved a number of rules. In this version of tag, once tagged a player goes in a marked off area or the 'barn'. Players in that space hold hands with one

another and are able to return to the game working together to tag others. While the students played this game at the beginning of observation #8, I made the following observations in my field notes.

> Bret immediately follows Ann as she runs around the gym. Once tagged, Rod grabs Bret's hand so they can leave the barn and get back in the game. They're supposed to stay together, but Bret runs around the gym on his own trying to tag kids. Rod just goes back in the game as if he was never in the barn. The other kids who are 'it' continue to work together in pairs. No one seems to notice that Bret wasn't playing by the rules and he still achieved the goal of running around and warming up for the lesson (April 4, 2005, Field notes, p. 35).

In this example of an activity with complex rules, Bret's participation, specifically how he played the game, was not the same as the other students. However, he was able to participate with his classmates at his own level. Once again, Mrs. Low or Mrs. Wood did not influence his participation.

When participating in individual activities Bret's involvement varied depending on a number of factors. Mrs. Low described his willingness to participate: "if it's something that he feels he can do and he can get it, then he's happy, but if it's a little too tricky, then of course he's upset and that's it, 'I'm not doing it'." This was evident at the beginning of the unit on paddle bats and scoops. During observation #8, the initial introduction to the activity, I made the following observations in my field notes.

> Bret is not very successful at catching a ball with his scoop. He has no difficulty throwing the ball into the air; however, he shies away from it as it comes down. He continues with the task despite his lack of success. At this point, most of the

other students are able to throw the ball and successfully catch it with their scoop. At 1:23, as Mrs. Wood explains the next activity to the students, Bret comes over to the stage and puts his scoop away in the basket. Mrs. Low asks him what he's doing and he says that he's done. She responds by saying this is what we are doing today and gets him to continue playing by suggesting he pick a different ball and different colored scoop. (April 4, 2005, Field notes, p. 35).

The preceding observation illustrates a situation in which Mrs. Low successfully encouraged Bret to continue with an activity. After a minute he was able to successfully catch the ball after one bounce, however, this was the extent of his interest in this activity. For the next ten minutes, Bret was content to sit on the sidelines and watch the other students. Mrs. Low adapted the activity to rolling the ball on the floor and was able to engage Bret for the remainder of the class. Without Mrs. Low in physical education on this day, Bret probably would have given up near the onset of the class. I spoke with Bret after class to try and understand what he thought of class that day. This is how Bret described his perception of class on this day.

Researcher: How was gym today?

Bret: Good

Researcher: What was your favorite part?

Bret: The park

Researcher: The park? At recess?

Bret: Yeah (April 4, 2005, Field notes, p. 36)

It is interesting that he chose his favorite part of the class to be something outside of the physical education environment altogether. Perhaps this was Bret's way of expressing his

dislike for the scoops and balls activity from that day. The next day in gym, observation #9, Bret spent a great deal of time sitting on the sidelines and not participating in the scoop and ball activities. After class I tried to talk to him about why he was sitting throughout most of the class. Bret made some random noises and when I pursued the subject, he said, "stop". His refusal to discuss the situation suggests that he was not comfortable talking about class that day. During his interview and after class following observation #3, Bret was happy to tell me that his favorite thing was gym, which suggests that he usually likes physical education. As he did not experience a great deal of success with the scoop and ball activities, it is consistent with Mrs. Low's description of Bret's tendency to want to give up on activities that he finds frustrating.

Mrs. Low's role in Bret's participation was very important, as Mrs. Wood did not have the time to be able to provide Bret with the one on one support to keep him engaged and participating. Mrs. Low said, "If something is frustrating in gym, or the rules are too hard to understand, I just try to simplify it a bit, and if it's a game that just won't really work, then I might go get a ball and go in a corner and do something, but usually he just gets right in there and has fun for the most part." During the times when the class was engaged in group activities with more complex rules (e.g. soccer), Mrs. Low was not observed taking Bret into a corner to do an alternate activity. While she encouraged him to continue participating in soccer, she did not find alternate activities for him to do when he had clearly given up and was sitting on the sidelines.

Essentially, Mrs. Low was present to provide Bret with the one on one support that his regular physical education teacher did not have the time to provide. They were able to work on easier skills if necessary "like catching, one bounce and catch, just things

that can really help him to become more co-coordinated and things like that." The following is an example taken from my field notes, from observation #8, the first day of the unit on paddle bats and scoop balls and on this occasion, illustrated Mrs. Low adapting an activity to engage Bret.

> A group of boys are using their scoops to throw the balls to against the wall, passing to them. Initially, Bret is content to sit and watch them. However, Mrs. Low is able to engage Bret by rolling the ball to him while sitting on the floor. This appears to work as he continues to play with her. She encourages him verbally by saying "Yah!" as he successfully rolls the ball to her (April 4, Field notes, p. 35).

Mrs. Low also identified part of her role with Bret as stepping back where possible to allow him the opportunity to develop some independence and to interact with other students. Perhaps when Mrs. Low did not offer support in-group in activities, she was giving Bret space to develop some independence and explore his level of participation on his own. During the Mission Impossible unit (i.e. an obstacle course that the students completed in partners), in observation #3, Mrs. Low assisted Bret so that he was able to participate with Stu. There was a station, which involved the students spotting one another on the climbing wall. Bret tried to support Stu by putting his hands directly on him. Mrs. Low then showed him how to spot Stu without actually touching him. This allowed Bret to continue to participate in the activity as independently as possible (March 14, 2005, Field notes, p.13).

When I discussed Mrs. Low's role in the gym with Allen, he identified the importance of her presence in supporting Bret. He said that without Mrs. Low working

with Bret in physical education, "it would be difficult for him… if Bret didn't have Mrs. Low she (referring to Mrs. Wood) would have to watch Bret then if she had to watch someone else, Bret would have to wait." Allen considered having an aide in a classroom normal. According to Allen, Bret felt included in physical education "because Mrs. Low's there to help him and a lot of people that have those have people with Mrs. Low." Allen recognized that Mrs. Low played an important role in helping to provide Bret with the opportunity to participate in physical education.

Mrs. Wood identified students who demonstrated good behavior as more likely to interact with Bret. She noted, "I think it's the more positive students that seem to have interacted with him, and the ones that have a behavior problem themselves haven't really interacted with him." Although Mrs. Low did not identify specific characteristics of students willing to interact with Bret, she referred to students who will consistently work with him. "There're kids that always consistently would love to help or be a partner and then there's some that'll go through stages of wanting to do that." Mrs. Low further described some of the possible reasons a student may or may not want to interact with Bret. Some "even say 'oh do I have to, do I have to?' cause they know it might be a bit slower and then there are the kids who love to cause they genuinely want to or some people feel like they're really helping." During observation #3, when Stu was partners with Bret, he appeared to really enjoy being in the role of helper. I made the following observations in my field notes.

> At 1:17, Bret runs past two parts of Mission Impossible as they find their starting activity. Stu chases after him. "Bret you have to go back. Ok, you can just start here." Stu show Bret how to get over the pommel horse. "You have to show him,"

Stu tells the other kids waiting in line. Stu helps to lift Bret onto the pommel horse. "You can do it Bret," says Stu. "Whoa" "He's strong" say other kids who are waiting for Bret to finish on the pommel horse. At 1:18, "Bret, I'll show you how, ok?" Stu shows Bret how to climb the climbing wall. "Put your foot here and your hand there" (March 14, 2005, Field notes, p.14).

One concern that may arise is whether it is possible for Bret to develop an equal status relationship with his peers when their reason for interacting with him is that of providing assistance. Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Low identified Ann as a student who stood out in terms of her willingness to interact with Bret. Ann fit Mrs. Wood's criteria as she was a positive student and was consistent in her willingness to interact with him. There were many examples of positive interactions between Bret and Ann. They were often observed sitting side by side with their arms around one another while listening to instructions. On the first day of observations, when the students were lining up at the end of class, Ann ensured no one took the place in line she was saving for Bret. She told Stu, "No that's for Bret". (March 8, 2005, Field notes, p. 3)

On the first day of Mission Impossible, observation #2, Bret and Ann immediately paired up. At 3:05, Ann gives Bret a half hug and they point excitedly at different equipment. The kids are now sitting up on their knees, standing, they're excited and it looks like they can barely contain themselves. At 3:20, Ann shows Bret where to land off the pommel horse and she encourages him by waving her hands in a 'come on' motion. Ann spots him as he attempts the climbing wall, showing Bret where to put his hands. Mrs. A stands off to the side. At 3:23, Ann shows

Bret what to do on the A frame ladder. They both attempt it together. (March 9, Field notes, p. 10)

During his interview, Bret identified Ann as someone he played with and who he considered a friend. While talking before recess one day, Bret told me he and Ann played Power Rangers everyday at recess. She said "no we don't" and then proceeded to ask Bret if he wanted to go over to her house during spring break "so we can play Power Rangers for as long as you want" (March 23, Field notes, p.25). Bret and Ann appeared to have developed a friendship based on sharing activities and spending time together rather than Ann consistently in the role of helper. Perhaps Bret and Ann's friendship could be considered an equal status relationship.

To summarize, Bret's level of participation changed according to the nature of the activities. He appeared to limit his participation in activities with complex rules and social expectations such as soccer. He seemed to be more comfortable participating in partner activities that were simple and flexible. Mrs. Low played an important role in facilitating Bret's participation, however, she was not observed helping his participation in the complex group situations he struggled with. Bret interacted with a number of students in physical education, where the students typically took on the role of helper. However, Bret and Ann appeared to have developed an equal status relationship.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed that the meaning of inclusion in the Grade 1 class was understood in terms of providing opportunities to participate and for social engagement. According to Goodwin et al. (2003), understanding the philosophy of students and adults can be considered an element of the environmental context, which is similar to the pre-teaching phase of their conceptual framework of inclusion. The framework also includes a teaching phase, which includes the variables that influence inclusion and a post-teaching phase that describes the experiences of students and teachers within the inclusive environment. Discussion of the philosophy of inclusion held by the students and adults will be presented according to the latter two parts of Goodwin et al.'s (2003) conceptual framework. First the significant factors that seemed to influence inclusion in this study (i.e., social interactions and misbehavior) are discussed. Following this, a description of Bret's experience with inclusion in his physical education class is presented. This includes a discussion of the affect of the variables (opportunities to participate, social engagement, and factors influencing inclusion) on Bret's experience.

The Meaning of Inclusion

Opportunities to Participate

The definition of inclusion that Mrs. Wood provided during her interview focused on providing opportunities for all students to participate in physical education. When compared to other definitions found in the literature, Mrs. Wood's definition appears incomplete. For example, an early definition of inclusion by Block (1994) describes inclusion as "providing all students with appropriate educational programs geared to their abilities and needs with supports and assistance as needed to ensure success" (p. 16).

Block viewed all students as individuals with unique abilities and needs, and did not focus exclusively on whether or not a student had a disability. Similarly, Mrs. Wood recognized that there is a wide range of developmental abilities in planning physical education activities for her Grade 1 class, rather than planning activities specifically for students with disabilities and for students without disabilities. However, an important difference between Mrs. Wood's definition of inclusion and the definition presented by Block (1994) is Block's consideration of the potential need for support as an important element of inclusion. Perhaps Mrs. Wood assumed that support would necessarily be provided for a child who needed it to participate, given that she is in the favorable position of teaching an inclusive Grade 1 class with the assistance of a full time aide for the child with a disability. Because she did not have to work in an environment without the appropriate level of support, Mrs. Wood may not have recognized its role in successful inclusion, or may have assumed that the provision of supports (when needed) is imbedded in opportunities to participate.

Nevertheless, defining inclusion as simply providing opportunities for participation does not encompass the full meaning of inclusion as defined by Block (1994) and Goodwin et al (2003). In the preceding chapter, the description of Bret's participation included the interpretation that his participation was quite dependent on the nature of the activity. Perhaps Bret's level of participation would have increased if, on occasion, he had been provided more support by Mrs. Low and Mrs. Wood. Reflecting on Bret's participation and his tendency to sit out during certain activities, it appears that there is more to successful inclusion than simply providing the basic opportunity to participate. Inclusion is a complex process that involves many factors.

Bringing Bret into the gym environment is the first step in providing him with the opportunity to participate. Both Mrs. Low and the school's principal mentioned that the ideal placement option for children with disabilities is within the regular classroom, for all subject areas, including physical education. It appeared that the principal and Mrs. Low saw their roles as ensuring that Bret had this initial opportunity, and then Mrs. Wood was seen to be responsible for structuring the physical education class to provide the actual opportunities for participation in activities. According to the literature, the teacher is one of the most important factors influencing the success of inclusive education because they are responsible for structuring the class to promote optimal skill development and essentially for determining what those skills are (Fox, Farrell, & Davis, 2004; Kemp & Carter, 2005).

To create an environment conducive to providing opportunities for all students to participate in physical education, Mrs. Wood employed an inclusive teaching style. An inclusive teaching style is part of Mosston and Ashworth's (1990) spectrum of teaching styles that ranges from a command style to a self- learning style, and is based on the various possibilities for structuring decision making within the classroom. To illustrate the teacher- learner relationship and decision making of an inclusion teaching style, a slanted rope example is typically used. Specifically, to create an atmosphere of inclusion, the rope is held in a slanted position (i.e., high at one end, low at the other end) rather than horizontally, to create a variety of levels of difficulty for students to practice jumping. These levels of difficulty are referred to as entry points, and provide learners with the opportunity to select the level at which they would like to jump. In this way, students are provided with the opportunity for successful participation at their own levels,

thereby creating an inclusive atmosphere (Mosston & Ashworth, 1990). Mrs. Wood was observed structuring her physical education class in an inclusive style throughout the scoops and paddles unit. She provided the students with a range of activities that allowed them to choose the entry point at which they felt most comfortable, thus creating opportunities for all students to participate.

In addition, Mrs. Wood was observed creating lesson plans using a reciprocal teaching style (Mosston & Ashworth, 1990). The "Mission Impossible" unit is a fitting example of the reciprocal style of teaching. "In this style, which is conducted in pairs, students learn to perform the task and receive feedback from their partners. A new dimension — social interaction — becomes the focus of episodes in this style" (p.86). Students take turns assuming the roles of "doer" and "observer" as they switch between performing the activity and spotting their partner (Mosston & Ashworth, 1990). This description of the reciprocal style is consistent with Mrs. Wood's description of students' learning about working in partners during Mission Impossible. Accordingly, Bret was presented with the opportunity to switch roles, and to be responsible for spotting his partner. This was made possible with support from Mrs. Low. Importantly, this style of teaching provides the potential to increase Bret's opportunities for developing equal status relationships with his classmates.

Opportunities for Social Engagement

Some researchers in adapted physical activity have differentiated inclusion into two types, namely physical inclusion and social inclusion (Sherrill, 2003). Physical inclusion focuses exclusively on placement in the physical education environment with students without disabilities (similar to Block's [1994] definition). In contrast, social

inclusion refers to meaningful interactions between students with and without disabilities. Sherrill has suggested that teachers can facilitate meaningful interactions by planning cooperative activities that will encourage equal status relationships between students with and without disabilities. Equal status relationships are those in which both parties benefit from the partnership (Sherrill, Heikinaro-Johansson, & Slininger, 1994). Learning the social skills to engage in social interactions was considered by Mrs. Wood to be an important element of the physical education program. Sherrill described these skills, in terms of gaining social competence, which she considers to be a significant element of inclusion. Further, she states that social skills "should be treated as a companion goal to motor skill and fitness competence" (Sherrill, 2003, p.56). While Mrs. Wood considered the development of social skills as important within her physical education class, neither she nor Mrs. Low discussed the importance of equal status relationships for Bret. On the contrary, Mrs. Low referred to many of Bret's interactions as being with those students who really enjoy helping him.

Observation of Bret's interactions with other students revealed a mixture of equal status engagements and ones in which he was being 'helped' by other students. During partner activities Bret's partners often took on the role of helpers and guided him through the activities. Helping relationships are often considered a benefit of inclusion for students without disabilities, because they are able to develop and demonstrate caring attitudes and acceptance toward persons with disabilities (Block, 1994). However, interactions that are primarily or exclusively comprised of the student with a disability being helped by classmates without disabilities can also be viewed less positively because they do not lead to the development of equal status partnership (in which both individuals

contribute) and therefore may not lead to genuine friendships (Sherrill, 2003). In accordance with this view, results of a study by Fox et al. (2004) that examined the inclusive experiences of 18 primary schools with students with Down syndrome revealed that some teachers were concerned about the tendency of students without disabilities to 'mother' students with Down syndrome rather than encourage their independence. However, Bret was also provided a limited number of opportunities to engage in an equal status partnership during Mission Impossible when he took on the role of 'spotter' for his partner. Despite the fact that Stu (Bret's partner during this activity) assumed the leadership role for the majority of this class, Bret was able to reciprocate in the role of supportive partner with encouragement from Mrs. Low. Moreover, his interactions with Anne have provided Bret with a basic foundation to develop more friendships based on mutual respect and shared activities. Engaging in equal status interactions may also facilitate the development of Bret's independence.

Factors that Influence Inclusion

Social Interactions

Suomi, Collier, and Brown (2003) identified the emergence of cultures or social groups within kindergarten and fourth grade physical education classes, which they characterized using the terms "the popular", "the comfort zone", and "the leftovers". Those who fell into the popular culture were chosen as a partner on a regular basis, had numerous friends, and were not familiar with being rejected. Those in the comfort zone sought peers with similar backgrounds and educational experiences. The leftovers were described as those who struggled when asked to choose partners for activities (i.e., those who had relatively poor social and motor skills, but without a disability label) and those

who had a disability. These students did not actively seek out their own partners and were often paired together by the teacher. A similar culture was observed to emerge within the Grade 1 class studied here. Specifically, during the first half of the study when the students were responsible for choosing their own partners during Mission Impossible, the same students were consistently observed wandering around without a partner when the time came to choose. Mrs. Wood often paired these "leftover" students together. Because Mrs. Wood used a variety of strategies to pair up the students in the next unit, I expected the social situation to improve for all students, since they were not responsible for choosing their own partners. However, although there were no longer any students who were "leftover", new problems emerged. For example, Niles tried everything, aside from outright refusal to Mrs. Wood, to avoid being partners with Carl.

Based on my own personal experiences as an instructor in a physical activity program for children, I expected at the outset of this study that the selection of partners would be a significant factor influencing the inclusion (or exclusion) of students who were only marginally accepted or rejected. I assumed that the method used (e.g., students' choice, students paired with those who had matching equipment.) would directly impact students' interactions. Perhaps the method used to select partners is not as significant as I had originally thought, because social difficulties were observed for certain students regardless of the selection process used.

Misbehavior

Student participants in this study identified misbehavior as the most significant factor influencing inclusion. It was consistently referred to throughout their discussions about choosing friends, partners, and feeling included. For example, Tina described a

situation during her interview in which Mrs. Wood sent 10 students to sit on the stage for misbehaving during parachute games. According to Tina, Mrs. Wood denied students who were misbehaving the opportunity to participate in order to improve the experience for other students. The students consistently conveyed the view that "you cannot be included if you misbehave". The research literature suggests that similar views about the relationship between behaviour and inclusion seem to be held by teachers. For instance, Kemp and Carter (2005) reported that "students with intellectual disabilities who were perceived by their teachers to be successfully integrated into mainstream kindergarten classes had better on-task and direction-following behaviour than those perceived to be less successful" (p.42). In the present study, Mrs. Wood discussed the importance of student behaviours in terms of following directions in Grade 1, although she did not specifically refer to this as an influential factor for successful inclusion. Nevertheless, Mrs. Wood identified Bret as a child who follows the rules, and her statements suggest that she perceived Bret to be a student who was successfully included in physical education.

Unfortunately the importance of good behaviour for successful inclusion may present a potential barrier to inclusion for some children with disabilities. Specifically, this relationship may result in fewer opportunities for children who misbehave due to the nature of their disabilities (rather than because they are intentionally choosing to misbehave). Recall that both Mrs. Low and the principal of the school stated that inclusion means having the child with a disability in the regular classroom as much as possible, as long as it does not impact the experience of the group. It would be interesting to know what the criteria is that is used to gauge the level of impact, and the point at

which they determine the impact is too great. Are disability specific exceptions to this 'rule' possible; is there ever a situation in which it is more important for a student to feel included than to behave well? Are the criteria for good behaviour and the consequences for bad behaviour the same for children with and without disabilities? In this study Cam was a child whose misbehavior consistently impacted the rest of the class, and as a result, Cam was sent to the office almost everyday. Would the same outcome have resulted if Cam had a disability? In order for all students to be treated equally, should they be treated the same? This very question can underlie the foundation for inclusion. In a setting, that acknowledges a range of abilities and strives to provide opportunities to meet unique needs, should there also be consideration for a range of possibilities for acceptable behaviour? Perhaps this highlights the complex nature of inclusion, as a constant struggle to meet the individual needs of students while managing the class as a whole.

From the perspective of the students, those who misbehaved were not considered to be desirable choices for partners or even friends. This is similar to a study, which examined Grade 3 student's perceptions of physical education. Students who were disruptive were considered undesirable choices for partners as they caused the teacher to become upset which in turn often restricted their opportunities for participation (Ratliffe & Inmwold, 1994). I was surprised that misbehavior had such a significant influence on the experience of inclusion in this class. I had expected that disability would be more important in determining whether a child was included or not, possibly because behaviour has not been specifically identified as a significant influence in other recent studies of inclusion in physical education (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Kalyvas & Reid, 2003; Place & Hodge, 2000). However, research into the behavioural precursors of

peer social status has reportedly found that inappropriate behaviour leads to rejection or neglect from peers (Dodge, 1983). This suggests that if a child with a disability has negative or inappropriate behaviours, then he or she will not be included as a result of the behaviours (rather than because of the disability).

Suomi, Collier, and Brown (2003) identified the importance of demonstrating appropriate social skills for students with disabilities. Inappropriate social skills such as touching, hugging other students and hand gestures, were identified as negatively affecting students with disabilities' opportunities to participate in positive social interactions. Since it was the specific behaviours that influenced students' opportunities, this suggests that a student with a disability who engages in appropriate behaviours will be included in Physical education.

Bret's Experience with Inclusion in Physical Education

Bret's experience with inclusion was very complex. From the perspective of the adults within this setting, Bret is included in this physical education class because he was provided with opportunities to participate. However, my observations of the class reveal that he did not always participate. There were many activities, such as group soccer games and many of the activities in the scoops and balls unit, during which Bret chose not to participate and instead sat on the sidelines. According to the adults' definition, Brett was included because he had the opportunity; it was simply his choice not to engage in the activity. But was he included? Was Bret content to sit on the sidelines? There were times when he was smiling and appeared to be an active cheerleader (e.g., during soccer). However, he also refused to talk about his lack of participation following the first day of scoops and balls.

Overall, Bret appeared to have control over the extent of his participation in class; Mrs. Low was content to allow him to sit on the sidelines on occasion. This may have a positive impact on Bret's perception of inclusion, because he was not forced to participate when he did not want to. Fatigue was a potential limiting factor for Bret's participation, and allowing him some flexibility in his level of participation might be one way that his teachers recognized individual differences in students' fitness levels. The importance of an aide in supporting the participation of a child with Down syndrome in physical education was recognized by Fox, Farrell, and Davis (2004) in a study, which identified factors associated with effective inclusion for students with Down syndrome.

According to the students without disabilities, opportunities for social engagement represent a component of inclusion. Bret was afforded such opportunities in physical education, regardless of whether or not he actively participated in the activities or not. Following the soccer game, he joined in with the rest of his team when it was time to shake hands and he was able to talk with his friends as they lined up at the end of class. Moreover, Bret was not always on the sidelines. He was an active partner throughout Mission Impossible and he interacted with his partner towards the end of the scoops and balls unit. Therefore, from the perspective of the students without disabilities, Bret's experience of inclusion was likely viewed as positive, at least in terms of Bret's opportunities to interact with his classmates.

My understanding of Bret's experience was generated primarily from data from perspectives other than his own. In particular, it is based on my interpretation of his interview, my observations of the class, and through conversations with both Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Low. This is primarily because the results from my interview with Bret did not

reveal the same rich, descriptive data that interviews with his classmates did. For example, during interviews with the other children, I was able to engage the students in a discussion about what it meant to be included. For some children, it was necessary to change the wording of the questions and to provide examples to prompt a response. However, despite my effort to use those strategies with Bret, he was unable to provide the same level of description and reasoning. Perhaps in Bret's case, this was due to his cognitive and language limitations. Interviews with children ranging in age from 5 to 11 with Down syndrome were conducted by Fox, Farrell, and Davis (2004) to understand the factors influencing inclusion for students with Down syndrome. The quality and quantity of information generated from these interviews varied depending on the students' age and skill level. This suggests that the experience of interviewing a child with Down syndrome is one that is unique, with results that vary considerably depending on the individual child.

When talking about inclusion, the children without disabilities who were involved in this study did not immediately identify Bret as someone who was different and not included. Results from Diamond and Hestenes (1996) revealed that children aged 3 to 6 demonstrated a lack of awareness of Down syndrome as a disability, even though they were able to identify someone with a physical disability. However, children in Grade 3 demonstrated awareness of different facial features in children with Down syndrome which suggests that children become more aware of disabilities as they increase in age (Goodman (1989) as cited in Diamond & Hestenes, 1996). In addition, based on interviews and observations of preschool children, younger children are more likely than older children to interact with peers with disabilities (Diamond & Huang, 2005). The

children involved in this study were in Grade 1, thus perhaps their ideas about disability and inclusion will change as they increase in age.

As indicated, the children identified misbehavior as a significant influence for inclusion rather than disability. However, this does not mean that the students considered Bret to be the same as them. Observations of the class revealed that many of the students seemed to be aware of the need to assist Bret in physical education (e.g., during partner activities). This helping role immediately changed the nature of their interactions with Bret. In addition, students such as Allen considered Bret to be different from him because he had the extra support of a teacher aide within the classroom.

CHAPTER X: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

A case study of a Grade 1 physical education class was conducted to understand the experience of inclusion from multiple perspectives. Interviews were conducted with a boy with Down syndrome, five of his classmates, his physical education teacher, aide and the school's principal. In addition to the interviews, the physical education class was observed for a period of 6 weeks and extensive field notes were kept.

Within this class, inclusion was conceptualized in terms of the provision of opportunities for participation and social engagement. Mrs. Wood, the physical education teacher, often used an inclusive teaching style which was conducive to providing opportunities for participation, as students were able to choose the level of activity appropriate to their ability. Partner activities afforded students opportunities for social engagement. This was important as students considered spending time with others to be an element of feeling included. The results also indicated that the most significant influence on a student's opportunity for either participation or social engagement was misbehavior. Those children who misbehaved were denied opportunities to participate and were often not chosen as partners in various activities. This is a significant finding, as misbehavior has not identified in other studies of inclusive physical education (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Kalyvas & Reid, 2003; Place & Hodge, 2000). Further research is needed to determine whether this finding is specific to the case under investigation, or whether it can be generalized to other settings.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although the findings of this study highlighted the relative importance of behaviours and disability for inclusion in the physical education class studied, it must be remembered that the participants were quite young (in Grade 1). An obvious question for future investigation is whether the students' perception of misbehavior as the most influential factor for inclusion will change as they age and mature? A longitudinal investigation of the experience of inclusion for Bret and his class as they progress through elementary school would certainly be valuable. This would include a specific focus on his interactions with the other students as they mature and their attitudes toward people with disabilities, physical education, and inclusion develop.

Other recommendations for future research include a further examination of the influence of teacher aides and their role in providing opportunities for participation and social engagement for children with disabilities in physical education. An investigation into the understanding of inclusion currently held by physical education teachers and aides and the influence of professional development opportunities is needed. Finally, the experiences of inclusion of other students with intellectual disabilities would certainly increase our understanding of how children with intellectual disabilities understand and interpret inclusive physical education.

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Appendix A

Establishing Rapport

In the classroom I spent time talking with the students, checking out books in the library and joining in the good-bye circle at the end of the day. In the gymnasium I was simply another student, engaging in activities while refraining from taking any leadership roles. This was an opportunity for the students to become accustomed to my presence in the classroom and gymnasium so that when the time came to begin observations, I was no longer a novelty. I was also able to establish a bond with some of the students thereby enhancing the interview process.

Throughout my time at Blackwood Elementary the students called me by my first name. This was important to me, as I wanted to create a distinction between myself and the other adults present in the class. My attire at the school was casual, as I wanted to establish a rapport with the students distinct from that of a teacher. I also initiated conversations at their level (in terms of language and topic) before and after recess and at the beginning of the lunch hour. The following is an excerpt from my field notes on March 16, 2005 following Observation #4.

> To differentiate myself from a teacher the kids call me Jen rather than Miss Jen or Miss Peco. I wear casual clothes everyday. I try to talk to the kids as an equal and breaks, as they come in from outside, before lunch, etc. I ask them about their weekend, what they did at recess, what they're having for lunch, etc and joke around with them (p.29).

I refrained from taking a disciplinary role. An example demonstrating the level of comfort I established with the students took place on one occasion in which I was late

joining the Grade 1 class. Noticing this as the students came in from recess, Niles was quick to say, "Hey, you're late!" and laugh as though I was another student.

The nature of this case study involved establishing a rapport with more than just the students. I immediately felt very comfortable with Bret's aid, Mrs. Low. She was willing to contribute insight into some of my observations and provide background information for several students. Mrs. Wood was extremely willing to invite me into her classroom, the gymnasium. She made me feel extremely welcome and offered to do whatever she could to help with the project. Her support was essential in the success of this study. From the beginning, Mrs. Wood appeared to be extremely comfortable with my presence. We spoke together in the staff room, sharing resources we both used for programming. There is no question that the adults and students welcomed me into their school community. From the school secretary who greeted me with a smile everyday, to the other teachers I spoke with over the lunch hour, this school was open to guests and was excited about being involved in a research study. They gave me the freedom to come and go as needed and to stay as long as necessary. The hardest part was leaving the students at the end of the eight weeks. I went back to visit two weeks later and was greeted with students hanging off my legs begging me to sit next to them in the sharing corner and vying to be my partner in Physical Education.

Appendix B

Interview Guide (Ratliffe & Inmwold, 1994; Solomon & Carter, 1995; Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Vogler, Koranda & Romance, 2000)

Interview Guide- Child without a disability

1. What activities do you usually do in physical education?
2. Do all of the children participate in all of the activities together?
3. What activities would someone do if they weren't with the rest of the class?
4. How would you feel if you were doing a different activity?
5. Can you tell me about a good day in phys ed?
6. Can you tell me about a bad day in phys ed?
7. What do you like about phys ed?
8. What don't you like about phys ed?
9. What does it mean to be included in something?
10. Can you tell me about a time when you felt included?
11. Can you tell me about a time when you didn't feel included?
12. Do you think it's important to feel included in phys ed? Why or why not?
13. Do you think it's important to feel included in other classes?
14. What kinds of things does your teacher do to make sure all students are included/ can participate with everyone else?
15. Why is phys ed important? Is it important for everyone?
16. What types of things have you learned from phys ed?
17. If you could change one thing about your phys ed class what would it be?

Interview Guide- Child with a disability

1. What types of activities do you do in physical education?
2. What types of activities does the rest of the class do?
3. How do you feel about that (regardless if similar or different activities)?
5. Can you tell me about a good day in phys ed?
6. Can you tell me about a bad day in phys ed?
7. What do you like about phys ed?
8. What don't you like about phys ed?
9. What does it mean to be included in something?
10. Can you tell me about a time when you felt included?
11. Can you tell me about a time when you didn't feel included?
12. Do you think it's important to feel included in phys ed? Why or why not?
13. Do you think it's important to feel included in other classes?
14. What kinds of things does your teacher do to make sure you are included/ can participate with everyone else?
15. Has being in an inclusive phys ed class affected how you feel about phys ed?
16. Why is phys ed important? Is it important for everyone?
17. What types of things have you learned from phys ed?

18. If you could change one thing about your phys ed class what would it be?

Interview Guide- Principal

1. How long have you offered inclusive programs at your school?
2. How would you describe your school's inclusion philosophy?
3. What type of support is available for the staff?
   In PE or other classes
   In terms of training, consulting, etc.
4. How would you describe the implementation of inclusion at your school?
5. How would you describe the support from parents towards inclusion?
6. Is it different from parents of children with and without disabilities?
7. If you could change one thing about the inclusive process what would it be?

Interview Guide- Phys Ed Teacher

1. How long have you been teaching PE? Inclusive PE?
2. What type of training and/or support is available to you?
3. Can you please tell me about the PE curriculum for this class?
4. Please describe the unit you've just completed, what types of activities did you do?
4. Tell me about the upcoming unit.
5. What activities will you be doing to complete this unit?
7. What does it mean to you to be included?
8. What kinds of things do you do to help (child with a disability) participate with the rest of the students?
9. How would you describe your personal philosophy of inclusion.
10. How long has (child with a disability) been included in your class?
11. In general, how would you describe this class? In terms of their social interactions, the atmosphere?
12. Are there certain students who stand out within the class? What characteristics make them stand out?
13. In general, how would you describe the interactions between the students with and without disabilities?
14. If you could change one thing about this class what would it be?
15. If you could change one thing about the inclusive process, what would it be?

Interview Guide- Aide

1. How long have you been working with Bret?
2. What type of training and/or support is available to you?
3. How would you describe your personal philosophy of inclusion.
4. Can you please describe your role when working with Bret? Does it differ in the gym compared to the classroom?

5. In general, how would you describe the interactions between Bret and the other students?
6. Are there certain students who stand out within the class in terms of interacting with Bret? What characteristics make them stand out?
7. If you could change one thing about this class what would it be?
8. If you could change one thing about the inclusive process, what would it be?